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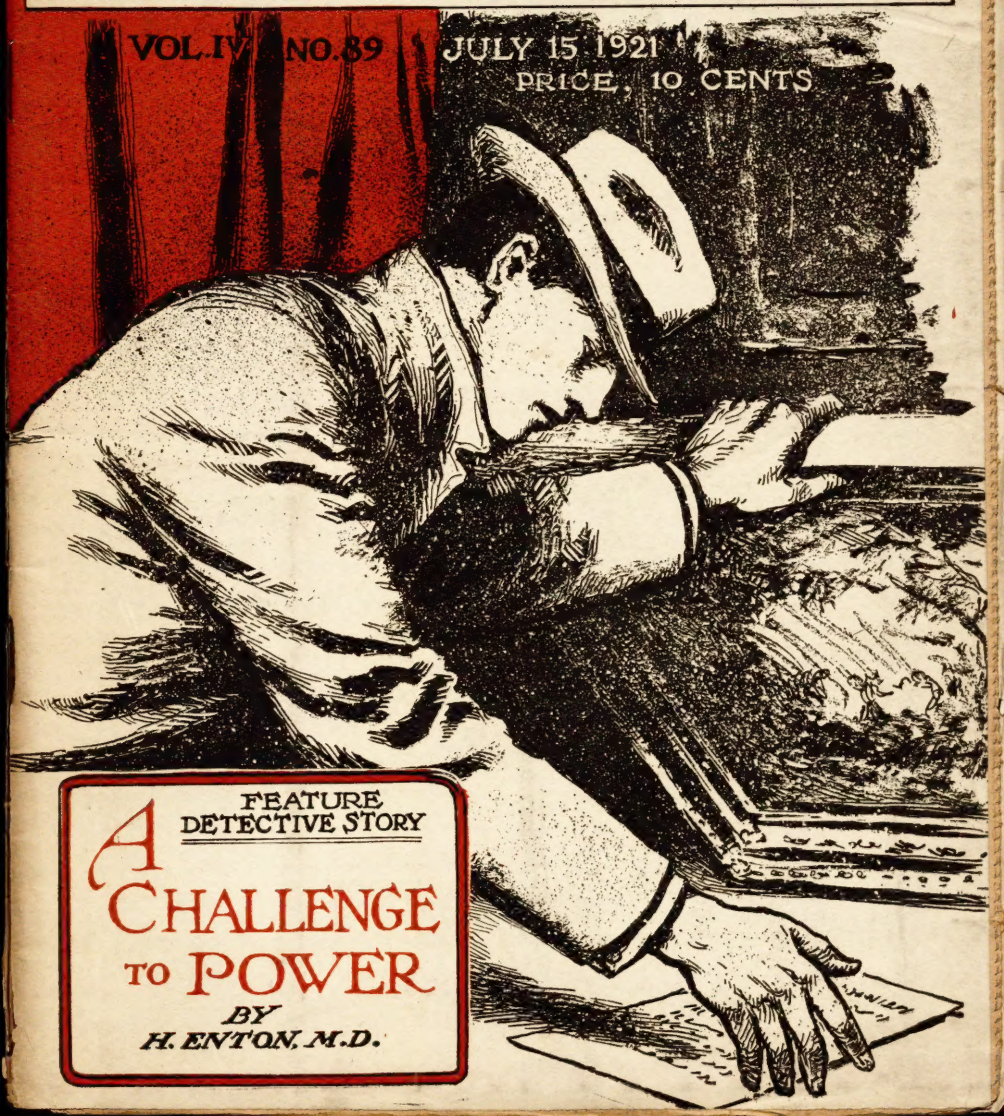

FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

A CHALLENGE TO POWER

BY H. ENTON, M.D.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Read "THE HOUSE NEXT-DOOR," a Detective Story, in Our Next Issue

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A CHALLENGE TO POWER

A DETECTIVE STORY

By DR. HARRY ENTON

CHAPTER ONE

NIGHTLY whistling the air of a popular song, and exuding a general air of content with matters in general, Barney Wade, the most successful sleuth attached to the Metropolitan force, ran gaily up the steps of the headquarters building; stopping only long enough to nod a few times to brother dicks he encountered in the corridors, he made his way to the private office of the head of the force. With a confident smile he gave a preliminary tap on the door, and when he got no response he threw it open and strode into the private office. The middle-aged man who sat at a desk scanning a letter which he held in his hand was so engrossed in his task that he did not even look up from the type-written page on which his eyes were fixed. His face was set in the ugliest kind of a scowl. Wade, whose expression showed that he was fairly bubbling over with eagerness to communicate something to his superior, closed the door.

"Congratulate me, chief," he exclaimed. "I've struck a trail that will enable you to put your hands on that wise bond forger that Scotland Yard is so anxious to——"

"To blazes with Scotland Yard," explosively announced the chief, to the intense astonishment of his favorite, who was expecting the warmest kind of praise for recent good work in a case of international importance. "What is Scotland Yard to me?"

Wade elevated his eyebrows in speechless surprise, looked closely at his superior, and noted

that the latter's face was deeply flushed, and wore such an expression as one might expect to see on the countenance of a man who has been grossly insulted. Barney shrugged his broad shoulders, wrinkled his hawklike nose, fixed his keen eyes on the flushed face of the man before him, and, heaving a sigh of disappointment, sat down heavily in a chair. The chief's eyes were fixed on the typed page he held in a hand which fairly shook with excess of rage. There was no sound in the office for the next few minutes, during which time the chief continued to glare at the letter. Wade, deeply puzzled, narrowly watched him and waited for the moment to come when he would speak out.

Finally the chief drew in a deep breath, favored the letter with one last and very intense scowl, and then tossed it across the desk to his subordinate. "Read that," he curtly commanded.

Wonderingly the detective picked up the letter and began to read the clearly typed lines, and as he read the chief watched him with that same angry scowl contorting his usually placid face. This was what Wade read:

"My Dear Chief—

"This is to inform you that I am about to pull off the biggest job ever attempted in this city. Among the many millionaires in town, there are several whose residences contain enormous wealth. I am going to make you sit up and gasp when I assert that the haul I intend to make will amount to millions of dollars. This enormous plunder I shall not be able to realize on in the usual manner, for the fences would refuse to handle it. And that fact brings me to the milk in this cocoanut. The victim will be willing to pay a million dollars for the return of the property, and I am going to offer you forty per cent commission for contracting the negotiations. It should net you about four hundred thousand, and without risk, and as there is not a straight hair in your head nor an honest drop of blood in your arteries, I am sure that you will be glad to act as my agent. This affair will enable you to retire and thus avoid the probability of ultimately being sent to the same stone walls to which you have consigned many innocent men. In a very short time I shall send you a brief communication, in which I shall name the date, and even the hour when this haul will be made. Of course I shall not furnish the name and address of the proposed victim, for with that much in hand, even such a dub as you might be able to defeat the scheme. But the day and the hour you shall know. That I pledge to make known to you in my next letter, on the solemn word of

"Yours sincerely,

"A King Crook."

As Wade read the remarkable letter, his face expressed one continuation of the most profound shocks. The chief, watching him narrowly, was hearing snorts and growls, accompanied by spasmodic clenchings of his hands. When Wade laid the letter down, the old man exploded:

"Now you understand why I was in no mood to congratulate you on your good work a moment ago," he rumbled. "What do you think of that letter?"

"There is only one thing to say about it, and that is that it is the most insulting letter I ever read in my life," responded Wade. "Equally insulting and abusive, and there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the writer——"

"Hold on, Wade," requested the chief, "and give me the proper answer to my question, if you can. This is what I mean: you are the best man on the force, and you have reached that distinction because you are an impressionist as well as a practical police officer. I didn't need you to tell me that the letter was extremely insulting and abusive, but I did want you to tell me the instantaneous impression that you always get at the start of a case, and which I have come to regard in the light of a sixth sense."

"My impression bears out the concluding lines of the letter," promptly responded Wade. "He signs himself 'yours sincerely, A. King Crook.' I feel that he is really sincere, and also that he is a king crook."

"And I endorse the impression," said the chief, "but I want to call your attention to one thing that stands out in that letter like a signpost at a country crossroads, and that is that this crook is slapping me right in the face, and laughing at me."

"A challenge to power," rejoined Wade.

"That's just what it is, a challenge to power, the police power of this city. If he can get away with it, then the police power really amounts to nothing, and we would be more suitably employed packing people into the subway trains. I served fifteen years on the force before I got this job, and you have put in ten years of straight success, and if we put our heads together we ought to be able to stop this fellow. With our knowledge of criminals and the enormous sources at our command, we may surprise this confident rascal. You are the man I am looking to for aid, Wade, and I look for your best efforts."

"Which you shall have," was the hearty response," but until we get the promised second communication from the crook we cannot do much. That you will get the letter, I am confident. Until that time, however, we must think up the probable nature of the contemplated loot. You will notice that he says the fences will not handle the stuff, and that narrows the field for us. Know any numismatologists, chief?"

"Wouldn't recognize one if it came up and made signs for me," answered the chief, with returning good humor. "Let's see; that means a chap who goes bughouse over a coin that perhaps wouldn't have bought a highball in the good old days when this was a free country. Am I right?"

"You are, and the haul might be a collection of coins."

"Nonsense," was the sharp rejoinder. "He says the haul will amount to millions of dollars."

"Exactly, and last night one of those coin maniacs, with ten millions behind him, showed me a collection that has cost him nearly a million dollars to get together, to say nothing of the expense of travelling several times around the world. Can you doubt that this collector would haggle about paying a million to recover it if it were lost?"

"You're perfectly right," assented the chief. "It is a bit of luck that you saw that collection last night."

"Perhaps so," assented Wade. "However, we can really do nothing more until the next letter arrives, so now let me tell you about that bond forger."

"I'm afraid it will be a waste of time," rather sadly said the chief, "for the truth is that this challenge to the power of the police is such an unprecedented thing that I shall be unable to properly consider any other matter until this affair is cleared up. However, go ahead and tell me how you got on the trail of this artist of the pen."

For fifteen minutes Barney Wade talked in a low, tense voice, telling matters that would have thrilled any brother member of the force. He finally pulled up abruptly and smiled when he noticed that the chief was listening to him with a perfectly vacant face, both eyes fixed on the letter, which still lay on the desk between them.

"I apologize, Wade," said the chief when he heard the laugh, and looked up and caught the grin on the other's face, "but to tell you the truth I have not heard ten words that you have said. This challenge to the police power has driven everything else out of my mind."

Barney was convinced that this was true, and with a regretful expression on his face walked out of the office, leaving the chief glaring at the letter with corrugated brows that indicated the deepest degree of concentration.

Out in the corridor Wade came to a halt and tried to make a guess at the identity of the man who had sent the disturbing letter. With an effort of memory he caused the faces of not less than a hundred able criminals to pass in review before him, but could not credit a single one of them with the brains and the daring necessary to carry such a play in crime to a successful issue.

"It's no use bewildering myself with useless conjectures," he finally decided. "I must wait until the next letter comes, and then I will be able to approach the task with an open mind."

The next morning he called on the chief bright and early.

He found his superior officer sitting at his desk and regarding with flushed and scowling face a letter which he held in one hand while the other hand beat an angry tattoo on the pad before him.

"Got the second letter from your bragging friend?" asked Wade.

The answer of the chief was to toss over the letter, and sitting down, Wade slowly and carefully read the following neatly typed communication:

"My Dear Chief—

"This will probably convince you that I am going to keep my word to the fullest extent. It is possible that the conviction may penetrate your abnormally thick skull that my assertions are no idle boast. You will receive this on Tuesday morning, and two days later, Thursday, at exactly three o'clock in the morning, I shall make my haul. You will be powerless to prevent it. Your whole staff, which includes some real detectives, will be unable to find the smallest effective clue to follow. The victim will, no doubt, come raging to you, and you will talk big, as you always do, and will accomplish nothing, which is what you are constantly accomplishing. The plundered party will authorize you to 'pay any price and no questions asked' for the return of the loot. With a vision of removal from office looming up, you will be in a receptive mood when I open negotiations with you. I expect you will lay a trap for me, hoping that I will walk into your assizes; but I am not the kind of fly that walks into any parlour on the invitation of such a blundering spider as you. In due time I shall write you my proposition for the return of the loot, and until then I remain

"Yours sincerely,
"A King Crook."

"Well?" gritted the chief as Wade finished reading the letter, "what impression do you get from that second challenge to power?"

"I get something more than an impression," quietly responded Wade, fixing his eyes on the letter.

"Out with it, then!"

"Our friend, who seems to be a well educated man, judging from the general style of the letter, betrays the fact that he is an Englishman. I notice that he spells our American word 'parlor' with a 'u', which is distinctively English, and marks one of the differences between the English and the American languages, which are two distinct languages, in spite of all that is said to the contrary. Then he also employs the term 'assizes,' which is the English equivalent for our county court, and those two facts settle his nationality in my mind."

Then Wade leaned back in his chair, while a concentrated expression came over his hawklike face, and for two minutes there was silence in the room, the chief watching the eyes of his favorite expectantly, for he knew that much frequently resulted from Wade's periods of intense thought. Finally the detective snapped his fingers and looked up with a new light in his eyes.

"Chief," he said, "I am impressed with the idea that the trails cross."

"What do you mean?"

"I have been trailing Peter Barr, known to Scotland Yard as Pete the Penman, and the Eng-

lish police give him the reputation of being the most accomplished and versatile criminal of the age. He is well educated, has a splendid personality, and can talk convincingly on most subjects. In Austria, posing as an English nobleman of great wealth and very old family, he made a dupe of a wealthy woman, and got most of her money after a bogus marriage. The Austrian police would like to make his acquaintance. In Paris, still posing as an English nobleman, and living in grand style, he hoodwinked experienced bankers into cashing travelers' checks which proved to be clever forgeries, and then departed for Spain, where he blackmailed a merchant prince for an immense sum, which he soon after dropped while gambling at Monaco. He has picked up several fortunes and lost them all in his passion for gambling. Thus he is either extremely well off, as the result of a recent coup, or else broke as a result of his incurable mania for gambling. That is why the impression has seized me that the trails cross, for there is not another criminal here or abroad, within my knowledge, who fits into this big job. Barr has never bothered with small matters, and this affair, involving several millions, is in keeping with his previous exploits."

"That all sounds reasonable," sadly admitted the chief, "but somehow I can't get the idea out of my mind that the whole thing is the work of a practical joker, an enemy of mine, who wants to take the joy out of life for me, and who will be shaking with unholy mirth if he sees how he has worried me."

"Put the idea out of your head, chief," confidently asserted Wade, "for there is no joke about this game. My sixth sense, as you call it, tells me that we are up against a superlative crook who means every word that he says, and that this projected robbery will be called off on time. Now, chief, let us get busy on the list of probable victims, so that we can have men posted wherever the trick is likely to be pulled off."

"And you can think of no way to prevent the actual commission of the crime," was the almost pathetic demand of the harassed chief, whose dependance on his gifted subordinate was so absolute as to almost justify the characterization bestowed by the writer of the two disturbing letters.

"No," answered Wade, "but I may be able to outwit him when I know what crime he has committed. Now, chief, the list."

CHAPTER TWO

FOR the next ten minutes they conferred over the men of great wealth, the ones who might well be regarded as possessing treasures enough within the walls of their homes to justify the boast of the arch-criminal. After the list had been revised, added to and corrected for the third time, Wade announced that it was as near perfect as it could be made.

"And now," said the chief, "how many men shall I assign to each house?"

"Two will be enough," confidently asserted Wade, "one to cover the front of the dwelling and one for the rear."

"But there may be a gang in on this," said the chief, whose face was drawn and haggard with worry, "and if it comes to a pinch, we want enough of our boys to collar the bunch."

"There will be no need of numbers," said Wade, in his quiet, assured manner, "for this kind of a criminal is always a lone wolf, unwilling to chance betrayal at the hands of a pal."

"I guess you're right, as you usually are," said the chief, "and it shall be as you say; two good men on each residence. Now, Wade, do you still have the feeling that the trails will prove to be cross ones?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen Pete the Penman lately?"

"I have always been twelve to twenty hours behind him, but I have learned something which leads me to think that he is fixing to trade off a bogus title of nobility for the wealth of a girl who has more money than brains."

"I like your confident tone," said the other, "and wish I could hear you speak as confidently about landing this crook who has so brazenly challenged the police power of this city."

"You shall," was the quiet rejoinder, "for the hunch possesses me with forty horse power that I am going to make Mr. A. King Crook swallow his brag. That's the way I feel about it, and my inspirations, as you know, have very rarely led me astray in the past."

"Never, to my knowledge," cried the chief, his drawn face relaxing, "and God grant that your sixth sense is vibrating true to form in the present instance. Well, we shall know more about it Friday."

Flashing a reassuring smile at the chief that made the latter feel hopeful of the future, Wade left the office and once more set out to trail the crook who was trying to dispose of forged bonds. Several times within the next two days he was very close behind the man he was trailing, just missing him by minutes at the offices of bankers and brokers.

Friday morning he lost track of his man, and about ten o'clock made his way to headquarters, and went at once to the private office of the chief, who received him with a broad grin and handed him a cigar, saying:

"Have a good smoke on me to celebrate the passing of a black cloud. That was either a joke or a hoax, for the only matter of importance that has been reported this morning from any precinct is the work of an anarchist, who last night blew up the front portion of Martin Marsden's residence with a bomb. While that requires investigation, it's not a drop in the bucket, so far as I'm concerned with——"

"Hold on," broke in Wade, holding up a restraining hand to check the undue elation of the

other, "and reflect that his name was on the list that we made out together. There is just a possibility——"

Further talk was cut off by the ringing of the house telephone which stood at the chief's elbow, and which was at once lifted up.

"Yes, yes. What is the name? Martin Marsden? Show the gentleman in at once."

"Perhaps I was crowing too soon," said the chief to Wade as he replaced the phone on the desk, "for I doubt that he would come to me about the bomb affair. Three attempts have been made to blow his home apart, and in each instance he has gone to private agencies for help. However, here he is."

The door was thrown open, and a quietly dressed man of middle age walked in, the chief jumping from his chair to greet him, for the person we call Martin Marsden was the tenth richest man in the United States, and wielded an enormous influence in affairs of all kinds.

The chief pushed a chair forward for his distinguished visitor, and then looked at him inquiringly.

"Chief," began Marsden, "you are no doubt in possession of information in regard to the bombing of the front of my house last night?"

"Yes, the report came in from your precinct the first thing, and it said that no injury to life or limb had resulted, which is cause for rejoicing."

"True," assented the man of great wealth, "and absurd as it may sound to you, the maiming of hand, arm or leg, we will say, would have distressed me less than the actual loss I have sustained."

"Eh! What's that?" demanded the startled chief.

"I have been robbed of millions of dollars worth of pictures, the rarest and finest art treasures in the world, representing the discriminating judgment of acknowledged connoisseurs throughout the world. What they represent as a money value is of no consequence, but what hurts me, and hurts badly, is the fact that they cannot be replaced. I have come to the conclusion that the bomb business was a mere camouflage to enable the thieves to carry out the theft of the paintings and afford them a smoke screen under cover of which they made their getaway. Here is the list of the missing canvases."

He placed a neatly written paper on the desk in front of the chief, and looking over the shoulder of his superior officer, Wade, with whom fine paintings and engravings were a passion, gasped with wonder when he read down the lines, which made good Mr. Marsden's assertion. The startling list read:

Bouguerau's "Nymphs and Satyr"; Bouguerau's "Angel of Death"; Bouguerau's "Bath and Vow of St. Anne"; Bouguerau's "Holy Family"; Da Vinci's "Last Supper"; Velasquez's "Venus with a Mirror"; Van Eyck's "Chancellor Rollin Kneeling Before the Virgin"; Michel Angelo's "Battle of the Centaurs"; Durer's "The Prodigal Son"; Titian's "Venus and Adonis"; Ruben's "Descent from the Cross'; Landseer's "Children of the Mist"; Rembrandt's "The Anatomical Lesson"; Raphael's "Entombment of Christ"; Veronese's "The Feast of Simon"; West's "Death of Socrates."

Little as the chief knew of such matters, he realized that he was looking at something that represented an enormous outlay of money. Finally he turned to his visitor and bluntly asked:

"Do you mind telling me what amount of money this list represents?"

"Four million dollars," was the quiet reply, "but the money doesn't give me a moment's thought. I cannot replace the paintings at any cost, and that is what has brought me to you. The thief knows that he cannot dispose of his loot through the ordinary channels, and there may be a chance for me to recover them from him by the payment of his demand, and the pledge to ask no questions. To put the matter bluntly, I am prepared to pay the full cost price of the paintings in order to recover them."

This so perfectly jibed with the suggestion in the first letter from the bold crook that Wade and the chief could not refrain from nodding to one another.

"That is a matter for future consideration, Mr. Marsden," said the chief, in his best official style, although it was plain to Wade that his superior officer was terribly upset. "Here is my best man, Detective Wade, and he will take charge of the case. Wade, take this list."

Mr. Marsden looked approvingly at the keen-faced detective, took a card from his card case, wrote a few lines on it, and handed the card to the officer.

"That will introduce you to my butler, a very shrewd and intelligent fellow, who is in charge inside, while two uniformed men guard the outside," he said, "and you can be confident that not even so much as a piece of paper has been picked up from the floor since the explosion brought me down from my bedroom to the art gallery at half past two this morning."

Something flashed through the detective's memory, and he looked at the chief in a significant manner. The latter nodded, and it was plain that the same thought had occurred to them, and that was that the time in the second letter from the defiant criminal named the exact hour of three in the morning when the big robbery would take place.

Mr. Marsden repeated his offer to pay any price for the recovery of the valuable paintings and then departed.

"Is it possible that these pictures could have cost such an immense sum as this millionaire claims?" asked the chief, turning inquiringly to Wade.

"Yes," was the prompt reply, "for I recall that the last time 'Venus with a Mirror' was sold it

brought two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, while the Meissonier picture, 'Soldiers at Cards,' which measures only ten by twelve inches, fetched ten thousand."

"Well," sadly said the chief, "if we can't land this crook, I may be compelled to take up his insulting offer, so get up to Marsden's house while the chances are good to spot something of value, for my sole hope rests with you."

Half an hour later Wade stood on the corner which accommodated the residence of Martin Marsden. A uniformed policeman stood near looking at the badly shattered front steps, and recognizing Wade he saluted and said that if the detective wanted to get into the house he would have to go to the gate in the side wall, where he would find another officer on duty and also the butler. Two minutes later Wade had handed his card to the butler and by the latter was conducted through the rear door of a one-story extension.

"This is the art gallery, sir," said the butler, looking mournfully around.

Wade swept the room with a comprehensive glance.

He saw a number of paintings still hanging on the walls, a step-ladder, a large number of handsome frames lying among the wooden backings which had held the pictures in place, and he also noted that there was a screw-driver and some strong cord lying among the rubbish. The scene told a plain story, and that was that the burglar had taken his time, removed the paintings from their frames, rolled them into a bundle and had departed with them under cover of the excitement created by the explosion. Then Wade noted something which brought an inquiring frown to his face, and he stepped forward quickly.

There was a handsome flat desk in the center of the room, and resting on it was a painting in its frame, face down. Wade lifted it up carefully, and the act released a slip of paper which had been held down on the desk by one side of the heavy frame. The detective permitted the paper to flutter to the floor, and then turned the painting over and laid it on the desk, exposing that exquisite work by Corot, the "Danse de Nymphs," which the detective, familiar as he was with the subject, knew was worth fully thirty thousand dollars. What had happened to cause the burglar to leave such a valuable painting behind? Wade turned the matter over in his mind.

"He had set the exact time of the job at three o'clock, and Marsden says that the explosion took place at half-past two, which indicates that in all probability the crook made an error in timing his bomb, and was compelled to hastily wrap up the paintings he had already removed from their frames and make his getaway in haste. That accounts for leaving the immensely valuable Corot behind."

Having settled this to his satisfaction Wade glanced at the slip of paper that the Corot had held down on the desk. He started with surprise, and then drew from his pocket the list that Mr. Marsden had brought to headquarters. Holding one list in one hand and the other in the other hand, he saw that they were identical except that the list he had found enumerated the Corot as well. Putting the two lists carefully away in his billfold, Wade produced a powerful magnifying glass and slowly made a circuit of the room, looking everywhere for finger-prints, but not expecting to find any, for he was sure that such an astute criminal would be sure to wear thin gloves. Then he turned to the waiting butler and asked:

"In addition to ordinary visitors, such as might call on your employer or you or any of the servants, what persons can you recall as having visited here during the last two weeks?"

"Well, last Friday, that is just a week ago, a man came here with a kit of tools slung from his shoulder and said he had an order from the manager of the estate to overhaul the locks of the gallery and the one in the solid iron gate in the side wall."

"Ah!" ejaculated Wade, with a gratified ring in his voice. "Can you describe the man fairly?"

"Yes, he was middle-aged, short and thin, dressed in the customary overalls and a check jumper, and I remember wondering how he could do good work, noting that he had lost his left thumb."

"Good!" cried Wade. "What else?"

"Then the next day, I think it was, a man came to inspect the electric meters, and while he was dressed in a plain business suit he made me feel that he didn't in any degree fit the character of an inspector. He looked like a lord."

"Explain."

"Well, sir, he had a very distinguished appearance, and had what would be called an air, if you understand me, and the way he grumbled about performing his work gave me the impression that he was probably the impoverished younger son of some titled British family. Moreover, he called inspecting the meters a 'bally' sort of a nuisance, addressed me as 'me man,' and in every way confirmed the belief in my mind that he was a broken-down English gentleman."

"Very good!" commented Wade, and to himself he added: "I feel sure now that the trails cross."

Then Wade directed the butler to call up the manager of the estate on the telephone and find out if any order had been given about the locks the previous Friday, and then to question the electric light company. Next he drew forth his well-filled billfold again, carefully extracted a small photograph from it, and when the butler came back with the information that neither one of the visits of the previous week had been authorized, Wade held the photograph suddenly up before him and asked:

"Ever see that man?"

One long glance at the photograph was sufficient.

"That's the inspector," he said.

"Sure?"

"Positive."

"Good!" again ejaculated Wade, but this time

there was more force to his tone and his hawk-like face was wreathed in smiles. He asked the butler a few more questions, elicited the knowledge that only Mr. Marsden possessed keys to the gate in the side wall and the rear door of the gallery, and that the butler had locked both of those doors the night before prior to retiring, and had found them open after the explosion. Well satisfied with what he had found out, Wade left the Marsden mansion and made his way into the street by means of the sidewall door.

Reflecting over what he had seen and heard, Wade recalled the slip of paper he had found on the desk, and feeling that he might profitably study the writing with regard to future comparisons, he drew forth the thick billfold and extracted the neatly written list, congratulating himself on the chance that the thief had written the list with pen and ink instead of typing it as he had done with the two letters he had sent to headquarters.

Absentmindedly Wade turned the slip over and then found there were two brief lines on the other side which read:

"77,777

"Looks like a collection of lucky numbers."

Wade studied the two lines with bent brows.

"Of course it is," he suddenly exclaimed, evidently answering a mental question, and then he walked to the corner, hailed a passing taxi, and was driven to the office of the Spanish consul. There his badge speedily obtained a five-minute interview with the consul, and he secured from the latter not only information he was seeking for, but also a brief line on the consul's card which led him to jump into his taxi again and order the driver to go to the office of a firm of Spanish-American brokers in Broad street. There his introductory card and his badge obtained all the information he sought, and he ended the interview by handing the broker a large red seal, with instructions as to the use of it after a certain not distant date. Then he passed out into the street, looked carefully along the opposite row of buildings, noting that there was a cigar store directly across the way from the broker's office. The officer saw the proprietor and made an arrangement which would permit the detective to sit in a chair near the front window from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon on several days following a certain date.

In a public telephone booth he called up the chief, and when the latter recognized Wade's voice he fairly shouted at him:

"Any good news for me?"

"Yes, there is," answered Wade, and he had to grin as he caught the note of intense anxiety in the question, "and while I don't want to speak too confidently at the present moment, I think that what with the matters I have picked up and the scheme I have thought up, we shall be able to land our man without fail. I'll make him swallow his challenge, ink and all. I will not say anything more over the wire, but it looks good to me. You will not see me for several days, but I want you to put a man out to pipe Thumb Staffordshire in a general way, so that whenever I phone a certain number to you it will be possible to have him waiting in your office by the time I reach there. There's nothing on Staffordshire, but I need him to cinch an identification. Be sure that he is not frightened away, because he will be valuable to me in this matter. Go home early and get a good night's rest."

"Thank you, Barney, and if I get it, it will be the first in some nights, as you know."

The rest of the day Wade walked and rode around town, visiting many 'shady' resorts, and holding low-toned conversations with the proprietors and frequenters of the places. The freedom with which one and all gave him various items of information sufficiently established the fact that he was regarded as a "dead level" policeman, one who would never reveal the source of any information he gleaned from the members of the underworld.

When he had finished what he regarded as a very satisfactory day's work he went home, and sat down with a well-filled pipe of tobacco, and thought matters over for three hours.

"I've thought everything out in the way of pointers, gossip, identification and the details of the balance of the work," he muttered in a well-satisfied tone as he knocked the ashes from his dead pipe, "and barring accidents it looks to me that I must win out. If it all works as I expect it will, how the chief will enthuse when I spin him the yarn."

The next morning he was up bright and early, and had purchased several papers before six o'clock. When he sat down to breakfast he began to scan columns that had never interested him before. Suddenly he jumped up from his chair.

"There it is," he muttered, and a broad grin overspread his face. "This makes it look like plain sailing."

Half an hour later he was seated in the cigar store in Broad street, smoking a cigar and covertly watching the window of the broker's office opposite. In less than twenty minutes he saw a big red seal attached to the plate glass across the way, and flinging away his half-smoked cigar he walked across the road and into the office, just as a distinguished looking and very handsomely attired man was placing a sealed package inside his coat pocket.

Wade walked up to him, threw back one lapel, and exposed his shining badge, at the same time tapping the man significantly on the arm. The distinguished looking man flushed and paled, and then burst forth:

"Is this my lucky or my unlucky day?"

With a perfectly blank expression on his face Wade drew forth a pad and pencil from his pocket and wrote on the pad:

"What did you say?"

"Gee!" growled the distinguished looking man, "think of being pinched by a deaf and dumb man!"

With the same marble face Wade pointed to the pad, and then the other took the pencil and wrote on the pad:

"I said that there is a mistake about this."

With his left hand Wade drew forth a pair of handcuffs, and with his other hand produced an automatic. Then he dropped the pencil on the counter, and with deft use of his hands snapped the handcuffs over the fellow's wrists. After that he picked up the pencil again, and wrote on the pad:

"Come along with me, and remember that one of my hands is in my outside coat pocket, holding a pistol, and that I can shoot straight from the hip."

CHAPTER THREE

WHILE all this had been going on the broker stood like a statue behind the counter, looking on with intense interest but saying nothing. The prisoner flashed a quick glance at him and then said:

"You know me, don't you?"

"I know that you claim to be in the employ of the British government in some way that has to do with the disposal of bonds that they float here and elsewhere in the world. Beyond that I don't know anything about you," was the broker's reply.

"You can tell this detective that I am a member of the English nobility, can you not? I sign my name the Earl of Margrave. He will then realize that he will have the English consul clamoring for his dismissal as soon as he hears of this outrage, don't you know?"

"No, I cannot," was the broker's steady reply.

Wade put an end to the matter there and then by gripping his prisoner firmly by the arm and pushing him out of the office. With his manacled hands in front of him, and a puzzled expression on his face, the prisoner marched along the street with his captor, his head bent until his chin nearly touched his chest. It was evident to Wade that the fellow was trying to fathom the causes that had led to his arrest. They had not gone more than a block when Wade noted the approach of a brother member of the force and gave him a signal that caused him to approach and at the same time refrain from asking any questions. Taking the pad and pencil from his pocket, and pushing his prisoner into a doorway, Wade wrote the following message:

"Telephone the chief that Wade says 77,777."

He handed the slip of paper to the other detective, who read it, nodded understandingly, and at once walked away. Wade was about to restore the pad and pencil to his pocket when the prisoner nudged him with his elbow, and when the thief taker looked up, his captive nodded towards the pencil and pad. Without hesitation Wade gave them into his manacled hands. The prisoner placed the pad firmly against the closed door, and holding it there with his left hand, was able to write with his other hand. When he had finished he handed the pencil and pad to Wade and the latter read the following:

"You have made an awful blunder, but I am not disposed to be hard on you, although I'm sure that the consul could have you bounced for this. However, there is a very important matter which will net me an enormous sum of money, and as I must be free this very day I will buy my freedom. I will give you half of the thirty thousand dollars I now have in my pocket."

The prisoner watched Wade while the latter slowly read the words on the pad. As the detective stood reading and seemingly rereading the lines and apparently considering the matter, the captive began to regard him with a very hopeful glance; but when Wade, without any attempt to write an answer, put the pad and pencil back in his coat pocket, the man's face fell in a woeful manner.

"Well, I'm blowed," he muttered, with a peculiar glance at his captor, "if here isn't a new kind of bobby. Why, over on the other side I could buy up the inspector himself at that price. What am I going to do with this chap?"

Wade listened to this soliloquy with a perfectly immobile countenance, and then hustled his prisoner along the street for another two blocks. The man was thinking intently and seemed to have arrived at a conclusion, for he came to a sudden stop. When Wade looked inquiringly at him he pointed with his manacled hands to the pencil and pad that peeped from the detective's pocket.

Wade went through the same process as before, backing his prisoner into a near at hand doorway, and standing in front of him while he wrote at some length on the pad, and then handed it over. As slowly as before the detective read the following communication:

"My Dear Sleuth:

"Once more I assure you, on the word of a British nobleman, that you have made a frightful mistake. I know for whom you have mistaken me, for the same man has got me into trouble before in London, where he is known as Peter Barr, and otherwise as Pete the Penman. I represent an English syndicate, and the urgent nature of the deal in which I am concerned involves millions, so, in order to secure my freedom, I offer you the entire thirty thousand dollars which I now have in my pocket. What do you say?"

Wade's answer was to thrust the pad and pencil into his pocket again and hurry his prisoner along the street once more. This time his cap-

tive was so astonished at the refusal of the bribe offer that he was unable to even express the depth of his amazement. At a very fast pace Wade towed his man along, and soon reached headquarters, when he marched him straight up to the private office of the chief and threw open the door.

"Chief," announced Wade, "I have the pleasure of introducing you to Pete the Penman, who owns to the true name of Peter Barr, and who is known to you through the medium of his typewritten letters by the high-sounding and somewhat boastful name of A. King Crook."

The chief fairly beamed with joy.

As for the prisoner, he turned such a bewildered, incredible look upon the detective that Wade, understanding the cause of his surprise, laughed in his face.

"Why, why, why," stuttered Barr, regarding Wade with eyes that grew round with wonder, "it seems that you can speak, after all."

"Yes," grinned the detective, kicking the door shut behind him and marching his prisoner up to the desk, "I can talk when I need to, and I can play off deaf and dumb when I want to obtain specimens of a man's handwriting."

"Blast it!" disgustedly exclaimed the prisoner.

"Don't cuss, Pete," quietly said Wade, "now, you boastful and opinionated thief, I am going to tell you that your two offers to bribe me were really useless. If I had been the kind of cop to let you go for a large financial consideration, you would not have been able to carry out your part of the crooked deal."

"Why," asserted Barr, "I've got the entire amount in crisp, new bills right in my pocket at this very moment."

"You only think so," was the quiet rejoinder, and thrusting his hand into the inner coat pocket of Barr's coat, Wade drew forth the sealed package he had seen him stowing away in the broker's office.

"There it is," said Barr, who seemed to think that he failed to properly place it in his pocket. "Can't you see what it's marked?"

"Certainy I can," said Wade. Then he threw the package down on the desk and all three could see that it was marked:

"Spanish-American Bank. $30,000."

Without a word the detective took out his penknife and cut the seals binding the package, and when it fell apart it could be seen that instead of a bundle of neatly arranged banknotes, it contained nothing but bill size slips of white paper.

When Barr saw this he was so taken by surprise that he actually fell into the chair opposite the chief, who was watching the matter with that absolute confidence in the outcome which he always felt in regard to cases handled by his favorite detective.

Wade turned to the chief:

"Is he here?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Send for him."

The chief turned to a bell on the desk, and rang it four times in very slow succession. Barr, who was now somewhat recovered from his latest shock, looking on with a keenness of eyes that told plainly that the man was mentally alert and trying to meet each danger as it arose.

The silvery tones of the bell yet lingered in the air when the door of an inner office was thrust open, and a man dressed in cap and overalls was pushed into the room. The moment Barr saw him, he gave a little gasp of surprise, and then squared his shoulders as though to meet a new danger. The newcomer, who had lost a thumb, looked inquiringly at the chief.

"Anything I can do for you, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Staffordshire," said the chief, "you can answer any questions that may be put to you by Mr. Wade, and remember that nothing but truthful answers will keep you out of trouble."

"I know that, sir," was the respectful reply, "but you have said yourself that you never knew me to do anything really criminal, and you must admit that although I make lots of keys for parties without asking impertinent questions, I never yet refused to let you have the right answer to a question."

"That's understood," here broke in Wade, "so tell me if you know this man sitting here?"

"Certainly, I do," was the prompt reply, "that's Peter Barr."

"When did you see him last?"

"A few days ago, when he asked me to go to the residence of Martin Marsden, tell the butler that I was sent by the manager of the estate—for that is what he represented himself to be, although I knew that was rubbish—and to say that I had been sent to attend to the locks of the side gate and those of the gallery. While I was working I was to get a 'squeeze' at them and then make keys from the impressions, for which he agreed to pay liberally. I didn't know of any law that made such a move as that a crime, so I took the job, and he paid me a hundred for each of the keys."

"That's all, Staffordshire," said Wade. The chief told the rascally locksmith that he could go. Very thankfully, in spite of his protestations that he never did anything criminal, the fellow slunk from the room, Barr looking after him with a malignant scowl.

Then the chief turned to Wade and extended his hand.

"Great!" he said, and Wade flushed with pleasure as he gripped the fingers of his superior. "Now, my boy, when this fellow here is safely stowed away, suppose you tell me how you worked it?"

"Don't send him away," urged Wade, referring

to the prisoner, "for it can do no harm to let him know the whole story, and, in fact, it will probably show him what he is up against. My case against him is cinched in such a way that it is absolutely unbreakable. The best part of it is that he has forged the strongest links in the chain of evidence himself. When I get through with my yarn, chief, he will be ready to come across and save the county the expense of a trial."

The distinguished looking prisoner looked at the speaker with a mixture of fear and admiration. Although Wade had predicted that the story he was about to tell would cause the prisoner to break down and confess, Barr settled down in his big office chair with just as intent an expression on his face as was recorded on the countenance of the chief.

"Well," began Wade, seating himself and addressing the expectant chief, "when you sent me up to Marsden's to investigate the robbery, I got the first hunch that right there the trails of the two cases crossed. The butler told me that the man who fixed the locks on the side gate and the picture gallery had lost his left thumb. I at once recalled that Staffordshire had worked for crooks in London the same as he does here, and that Barr had employed his skill more than once. When the butler told me of the visit of the distinguished looking inspector of the electric light meters, then I began to see more. The telephone confirmed my suspicions that both callers at the Marsden mansion were frauds. It scarcely needed the identification of the photograph sent to you by Scotland Yard to convince me that this all-around crook was the thief who stole the most valuable pictures in the Marsden collection.

"However, when I inspected the gallery I found there a valuable Corot face down on the table. When I lifted it I found a neatly written list, which on comparison with the one Mr. Marsden gave you, proved to be identical with it. It was proof that the thief had made out his list while pretending to inspect the paintings. Knowing the value of the Corot, I deducted that it was the premature explosion of his bomb that had caused him to leave the Corot on the desk and quit the place in a hurry. Then I had my work marked out plainly for me. Really, chief, it was not a bit difficult.

"After I left Marsden's house I took another look at the list that I had found on the desk in the gallery, and on the back of it I found written this peculiar inscription in two lines:

"77,777.

"Looks like a collection of lucky numbers."

"I at once recalled that Barr was a player of lotteries and I knew that the Spanish lottery was the only one, and that very sub rosa, that was being played in this city."

The detective paused, and the others showed by their expressions that they were wondering what was coming next.

CHAPTER FOUR

WADE was reflecting—carefully gathering all the threads of his story before he resumed:

"I also recalled that it was current gossip in the underworld that Pete the Penman was doing his British nobleman act again in New York and was likely to land a very rich society girl. I reasoned that if the memorandum referred to the numbers on a lottery ticket, I could trap him; if I could make him believe that he had won the grand prize in the Spanish lottery he would go after it without delay. It would enable him to make a dazzling splurge for the benefit of the heiress he was humbugging, and cinch the matter with her while he was waiting for the deal about the loot to go through.

"Now, fortunately for me, I had done several things for the Spanish consul which had put him under obligations to me. When I went to his office and laid the whole matter before him, he entered into a plot I invented, and helped me to pull off the frame-up.

"I knew that the capital prize was cabled immediately to New York, and that the rest of the numbers came a week or so later by mail. With the consul's aid it was easy to fix up an arrangement with the lottery agency in a broker's office to insert the number I believed Barr held as the capital prize, in order to bring him to the office where he had bought his ticket, as soon as he saw the notice in the paper. Then I made a working arrangement for the broker's clerk to signal me when Barr came to get his money. Next I waited. When I got the signal I was in the broker's office in time to see Barr stowing away the prepared package which he supposed contained thirty thousand dollars, and then I worked my deaf-and-dumb scheme to make him write his protest on the pad when he asserted that a mistake was being made. On the way here I got two more specimens of his handwriting to use in comparison with the list of paintings I had found on the desk in the gallery. I am not an expert in that line, but I would be willing to bet every dollar I have that the same hand wrote the list I found that wrote the lines I got to-day on my pad.

"Of course, chief, when the real number that drew the capital prize is cabled to this city it will be necessary to state in the newspaper that the former number was due to an error in transmission."

Very quietly, and just as though he had been relating the most ordinary series of events, Wade closed his mouth and sat back in his chair. The face of his superior was shining with appreciation of the story. Barr sat slumped in his seat, his eyes fixed on the detective in a fascinated gaze. Several times during the recital he had gasped with wonder, and now he broke forth in a storm of curses which made Wade grin broadly.

He cursed with an air that showed a mixture of chagrin and rage, and the chief sat in

silence listening to him for a moment, then held up his hand to stop the torrent of profanity.

"Shut up, you crook," he said, "or I'll silence you with a smash over your dirty mouth. I know what's eating you, you conceited scoundrel. You were some figure in the criminal world in London, and made up your mind to come over here and pull off a trick that would make you regarded in the same light by the thieves of New York. And you thought out a scheme that would not only net you the biggest kind of a haul, but would also give you unheard-of prominence as the only man in your line who had compelled the chief of police to act as go between for you and the victim of your projected burglary. Now your scheme has fallen through, and you are just as much peeved as afraid. Your challenge to the police power of this city has fallen flat. Your bluff has been called, and you know that when the whole story comes out you will be the laughing-stock of those from whom you expected the most profound admiration."

The fellow writhed, but his handsome face became distorted with a cunning sneer.

"I've still got the trump card," he asserted defiantly.

"What is it?" demanded the chief a trifle uneasily.

"The pictures, of course," coolly answered Barr.

"You mean that you will not give it up?"

"That's right. I've got some money, and there are good criminal lawyers who will take it, and perhaps clear me."

"Oh, then you think that you have a chance to escape conviction, do you?"

"Why, certainly," snapped the crook. "Give me the credit for having at least a little sense."

"I'll prove, Barr, that this case is cast iron and steel-riveted. Listen," interposed Wade.

An uneasy expression crept into the crook's crafty eyes.

"The butler identifies you as the bogus inspector of electric meters," said Wade, "and Thumb Staffordshire identifies you as Peter Barr, the man who employed him to go to the Marsden residence and get impressions of the locks of the side gate and the rear door of the picture gallery. Handwriting experts will prove that you wrote down the list I found in the gallery, after comparing the list with the three specimens of your writing which I secured this very day, and the broker down in the Spanish-American office will identify you as the man who presented the lottery slip which you fondly supposed represented the securing of the grand prize. Now, what lawyer is to get you off in the face of that mass of evidence, when it is backed up with your criminal record, as furnished by Scotland Yard?"

Clearly and quietly Wade delivered the items of his terrible chain of evidence, and as the full importance of it permeated the brain of the criminal he seemed to wince. However, he said nothing, and the chief, who could not disguise his anxiety, watched him closely, while the detective, assuming an indifference that he was far from feeling, stood apparently at ease. Barr considered the matter in silence for fully two minutes, and then seemed to come to a decision and raised his head with a jerk.

"Well?" asked the chief anxiously.

"I'm going to hold on to the swag. The way I look at the case is this. With such a lawyer as I can hire, I can cook up a defence that will either get me off completely, or else obtain a light sentence. Then I will make the lawyer the go-between, and turn back the stuff to Marsden, and get no less than three millions for it. With great wealth at my command, I can get an easy job in jail, and even get nights off with a keeper and go out and enjoy myself. Cash distributed with a liberal hand always secured favors. For that matter I might be able to buy a pardon for a cold million if a needy pardon board sat on my case, then I could hand over another million for the executive signature. When my stretch is up I could come out, go abroad, buy a real title, and live like a gentleman. There is always the chance that two or three jurors can be bought, and after a couple of disagreements the district attorney would tire of being licked and give up the case in disgust. Now you know why I'm going to hang on to the pictures."

His brazen effrontery in thus confiding his plans startled the chief.

Long experience in dealing with wealthy criminals made him inwardly acknowledge that there was much probability of truth in the statement, and with a sigh and a shrug of his shoulders he turned to Wade and said tersely:

"Lock him up."

Without a word the detective seized Barr by the arm and led him from the room. When the door closed the chief's face fell, and he cursed softly but earnestly for several minutes. In a little while Wade came back, and then the two men looked silently at each other for some time.

"My greatest case," said Wade, "and his stand, on the part of the criminal, stops me from making it a perfect record."

"I'm worse off than you are, for you are a subordinate, and I am the head of the department," growled the chief; "the newspapers will hammer me because the loot has not been found and restored to the owner. Yes, Wade, it has got to be admitted that this stand on the part of Barr takes all the flavor out of the case. I would rather have put my hands on the pictures than on him, for his capture is not nearly so important as the recovery of these stolen goods."

"That is true," admitted Wade, "and Barr knows it as well as we do. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that the rascal is at this very moment laughing at us and saying to himself that he has kept us from putting a proper finish to the case. Damn him! is there no way to bring this skunk to terms and compel him to divulge

the hiding-place of the canvases? Let me put my thinking cap on for another five minutes."

The detective strode up and down the office, and never did criminal watch the faces of a jury more anxiously than the chief scanned the countenance of his clever operative. Suddenly Wade stopped in his hurried stride and snapped his fingers.

"I've got it!" he cried. The drawn face of the chief relaxed and his eyes sparkled hopefully. "Back soon," merely announced Wade, and then rushed headlong from the office. The chief had such absolute trust in the officer's ability that he awaited his return without worry. That his trust was justified was made plain when the detective burst into the office ten minutes later, and with a grin laid a paper containing an order for the delivery of the pictures on the desk.

"Great! great!" joyfully mumbled the chief, and he ran around the desk to slap Wade on the back a half dozen times before shaking his hand again and again. "But how in the world did you accomplish it?"

"It was dead easy, chief. If this case had not positively benumbed my wits, I would have thought of it before. But, to tell you the truth, the feeling that the fellow's stand had spoiled the capture, and a conviction that pressure that would be brought to bear upon you to compel you to act as a go-between for the return of the property, drove common sense out of my mind. I forgot that the lines crossed and that before Marsden was robbed I had been working up the English bond case at the request of Scotland Yard. And that case I had also just about completed, and had all the proofs at my fingers' ends.

"Well, when I went into Barr's cell and told him what I had on him, and showed him plainly that if he and the proofs were turned over to Scotland Yard, he would be sent to the penal colony at Port Jackson, where the stringest rules would negative the power of any amount of money, and where he would be compelled to do hard labor for the next fifteen or twenty years. That struck terror to his soul, and when I offered him the alternative of giving up the loot and standing trial here, or being extradited to England whenever the British government made a demand for him, he said he would give up the loot if I would agree to pigeonhole the bond case. I consented. What do you say to that, chief?"

"I indorse the agreement," was the hearty response. "Wade, I want to oblige all other police departments in every way possible, but when it comes to a question of self-preservation I'm going to look out for myself every time. That fellow had it in his power to make a holy show of me, and if it had not been for the hold you have on him through the English bond case, I should no doubt have been compelled to make terms with his lawyer for the restoration of the loot, just as he said. As it is, we got out of the matter with flying colors and will be fairly covered with glory. The challenge to the police power falls flat, the bluff has been called, the thief will go to jail, and the victim will have the loot returned to him. Glory be!"

Ten days later Peter Barr was on his way to Sing Sing, under a sentence of twenty years. The chief, who was merely an ordinary human being where his emotions were concerned, could not deny himself the triumph of standing at the train door of the Grand Central Depot when Barr came through in the custody of two deputy sheriffs.

The distinguished-looking man who was shackled to the deputy sheriffs walked with head erect until just at the train gate. Then he chanced to look up, and met the chief's eyes, and although not a word had been said to him he flushed crimson, and actually sagged down between the officers.

The newspapers were loud in their praise of the police work that had landed a criminal of international prominence and had effected the return of the stolen goods. Mr. Marsden exerted his great influence, and obtained permission for Wade to receive a present from him, and then handed the successful detective a check for a large sum of money.

No reward could have made the chief half so joyous as the sensations he experienced when the case was closed with complete credit to the department he headed. He realized in the fullest degree that he would have been utterly discredited had not clever Barney Wade met and defeated the boastful "Challenge to Power."

MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS

A REPRESENTATIVE of the Psychic Research Library of Boston and First Selectman Edward E. Kent started probes of mysterious happenings reported at the home of Mrs. Sedley Lowd, Londonderry, N. H. According to Mrs. Lowd and others, chairs and heavier pieces of furniture perform sudden gyrations, buttons take flight from a work basket into the air, and table forks shoot through windows without warning.

The occurrences, as reported by Mrs. Lowd, her son Herbert, and their neighbors have stirred the town to such an extent that the selectman felt he ought to obtain some first-hand information, if possible. Since the alleged peculiar manifestations began the home of Mrs. Lowd has been besieged by inquisitive persons and self-appointed investigators. Their presence has not been entirely convenient for the family, as they have insisted on exploring every corner of the house to find the cause of the phenomena. Now they are confronted with a sign on the front door which says, "Keep Away."

The Marked Bullet

By EDGAR FULLER

ON the morning of my arrival in the little town of Craigston, where my brother had "buried" himself to practice the profession of medicine, the entire community was shocked by the discovery of a crime which had been perpetrated the preceding night.

A young lady, Clare Conway by name, daughter of a widow in reduced circumstances, had left her mother's house early in the evening with the intention of spending the night with the daughter of a neighbor. She was found dead on the roadside in a lonely spot between the residence of her mother and that of the neighbor.

My brother, the physician, was also the deputy coroner of the county, and a post-mortem examination made by him of the remains failed to reveal any wounds other than one on the face, or suggest any cause for the perpetration of the crime.

The verdict of the coroner's jury was that "Clare Conway came to her death by violence at the hands of some party or parties to the jury unknown."

Shortly after this verdict Clare's mother came to my brother filled with excitement, which for the moment supplanted her grief.

"I have just discovered that a diamond ring, which was the gift of her father to my poor darling, and which Clare seldom wore, is missing from the case in which she always kept it when it was not upon her hand. Although I was not aware of the fact before, I am now quite sure Clare wore the ring last night," said Mrs. Conway.

"Indeed?" said my brother. "Then, as no diamond ring was found upon your daughter's hand, it may be that robbery was the motive for her murder. A common thief would not have left the locket and chain and the sum of money found on the person of the unfortunate girl. Describe the diamond ring minutely, please?"

"The ring was a solitaire, very valuable, and upon the inner side of the golden band were engraven the words: 'From Father to Clare,'" said Mrs. Conway.

When she was gone and I was alone with my brother, I said:

"It is my conviction that there is some mystery back of this crime. I am deeply interested in the case, and have determined secretly to investigate it. Robbery was not the motive of the person who killed Clare Conway, or I am very much at fault in my judgment."

That day I succeeded in obtaining a photograph of Clare as she appeared before the murder. A visit to Mrs. Conway elicited the following information:

Clare had no enemies, and was not receiving particular attentions from any young man, so far as her mother knew. Thinking over the past, Mrs. Conway said she could find nothing in her daughter's life which could in any way be connected with her terrible fate.

I was about to take my departure, when Mrs. Conway added:

"There was one incident that occurred some months since to Clare in which there was something of mystery, although I cannot, as I have said, in any way connect it with her murder."

"What was that occurrence?" I inquired.

"One afternoon Clare visited the mountains yonder with some young friends to pick berries, and she did not return until late at night. In fact, much alarmed, I was about to rouse the neighbors and go in search of her, when she came into the house, white and trembling, as though she had seen a ghost. I had never seen her in such a state before; and in answer to my anxious questioning she told me that she had become separated from her companions, lost her way, and wandered until it became dark. She was frightened almost to death for fear she could never find her way home.

"But there was an air of constraint in her manner, and I thought at the time that she was concealing something from me.

"That night in her sleep she started up and said wildly:

"'Oh, do not kill me! I promise never, never to tell! Oh, let me go home! My mother will be frightened. All the others have left the mountains long ago. Spare me! Spare me!"

"It was evident that my daughter was the victim of a nightmare, and I awoke her.

"For some time after this Clare was not herself. She seemed to have something on her mind, and became timid and would not go out of the house alone.

"In time this wore off.

"The matter passed from my mind, and I had not recalled it until to-day."

That night I wandered about the town aimlessly, and at about midnight found myself in the suburbs of the village near an old frame house which had once been a hotel, but which was now untenanted.

The night had become very dark, and a thunderstorm was at hand.

Lightning flashed, and occasionally deafening detonations of thunder reverberated through the heavens.

Then rain began to fall.

I was turning to retrace my way to my brother's house, when a vivid flash of lightning sud-

denly illuminated the darkness and disclosed to my startled eyes a most strange sight.

The door of the old tavern was open, and issuing from the building came a party of three men, each of whom looked exactly like the other; for they all wore black beards, covering their features to the eyes.

Between two of the men was a muffled figure—that of a human creature of slight form, and not as tall as the men.

A blanket covered the form from head to foot, so I had no means of knowing whether the person thus concealed was a man or a woman.

That the person was a prisoner was clear, for while the two men between whom the unknown marched held her or his arms, the third man, who marched behind the prisoner, clutched a knife, and his arm was raised in such a way that, if he so desired, he could bury the blade in the body of the mysterious prisoner.

I had but a moment's view of this strange group, and the flash of lightning which revealed them exposed me to their view.

As profound darkness fell, I heard one of the men utter an exclamation.

Of course I realized that I had stumbled upon a criminal mystery, and I determined to follow it up.

In my pocket I carried a small case of surgical instruments, which are handy to have in case of need, and my revolvers, a pair of which were in my pistol-pockets, were loaded with cartridges, on the bullet of each of which was stamped the letter F, the first initial of my surname.

I had adopted the plan of marking all my bullets some years previous, and the plan often served an excellent purpose.

An instant passed, and then another flash came. By its light I saw two of the men rushing towards me; and, turning to run, as it was not my plan to take a hand in a fight just then, I saw two more black beards just like the others, rushing toward me from the direction of the village.

To fall into the hands of these men might be to lose my life; and, quick as thought, I drew one of my revolvers loaded with marked bullets, and fired at the two who were coming from the old tavern.

The muffled form broke loose from the one man who held it, and made a bound by the men who were advancing on me.

As my weapon was discharged, most unfortunately for the unknown, he or she stepped to the right, in front of the bearded men, and my bullet hit the muffled one.

A shriek of agony in a female voice rent the air, and the woman sank back into the arms of the two black-bearded men.

The others, coming from the town, were now close upon me.

"I may have killed some woman, the victim of these disguised crooks!" I exclaimed, as I turned and ran from the town, pursued by the men who were approaching from it.

A little in advance was a bridge, which I must cross in order to escape and a deep, swift stream rolled under it.

As I gained the narrow bridge, another flash of lightning disclosed three men standing at the end of it, each with a revolver leveled over the bridge at me.

With one desperate leap I sprang from the bridge into the deep, swift stream below.

As I struck the water, a volley of shots from the bridge informed me that I had leaped none too soon.

The stream carried me away.

For a mile or more, with little effort on my part, I swam along.

The stream ran through steep banks, and it was not until the river had passed these that I made a landing.

When I crept out of the water I found myself more than a mile from the village, and before me was a farm-house. A dog began to bark.

I crouched down in the bushes, and presently two men came out of the house with a lantern.

"It's about time the captain and the boys were here. They expect to run the prisoner—whose face only the captain and Jerry have seen—off the mountings to-night," said one.

"That's so," grunted the other. "But what ails Boze. I reckon the cur hears suthin', eh?"

"Seems so. I'll jist loosen him, and if there's any one about, it won't be healthy for 'im long," replied the other.

The animal came rushing for the bushes in which I lay, and it seemed that discovery was inevitable. As the blood-hound leaped at me an instant later I caught him by the throat, whirled him over, and choked him before he could utter a single yelp. Then I pushed the carcass into the water, and the current carried it away.

The men called "Boze! Boze!" again and again, but it is safe to say that "Boze" never came back.

I had determined to solve the mystery of this night's adventure, and find out who the muffled woman, whose identity the gang were striving to conceal, really was.

I knew now that they would bring her to this house; and intending to get help to return with me and rescue her, I made my way from the farm-house as fast as possible.

By a circuitous route I reached town, and hastened to my brother's house.

It chanced that he had been called out to visit a patient, but I put on one of his suits of clothes in exchange for my wet ones, reloaded my weapons, and transferred my pocket-case of instruments to the professional Prince Albert coat I now wore.

I was just about to leave the house to hunt up the constable and others to assist me in rescuing the unknown woman whom I had accidentally shot, though I hoped not fatally, when there came a ring at the office door-bell.

I opened it, and there stood one of the fellows I had seen at the farm-house.

"Are you the doctor?" he asked, civilly.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Waal, then, I want ye; my darter got hurt accidentally tew-night."

"Very well, I will accompany you," I said. I saw a chance of obtaining the information I wanted.

The man seated himself in a chair by the bed, never speaking a word.

"How was your daughter hurt?" I ventured to ask.

"You'll find out soon enough; might as well tell ye, though. Pistol went off accidentally," growled the man.

We soon reached the farm-house and I was ushered into it. I saw no one.

What seemed very strange was, the house was unfurnished, and it looked as though it had not been inhabited by a family in some time. The man led me up-stairs, and into a room, in one corner of which stood a closely-curtained bed. There was also a stand and a couple of chairs in the room.

The man strode to the bed, and pulled the naked arm of a woman from behind the curtain.

It was a shapely, white arm, and a blood-stained bandage was bound about it over the elbow.

The man seated himself in a chair by the bedside and held the arm, while I removed the bandage, and a bullet-wound was disclosed.

I noticed that an odor of chloroform pervaded the room. As I began to probe for the bullet, the woman uttered a groan.

"There, there, Hannah. Grin and bear it. Just tell the gentleman I'm yer father, and you accidentally shot yourself," said the man.

Mechanically the woman repeated in a trembling voice:

"He is my father, and I accidentally shot myself."

"There, you see everything is all right, doc, so go ahead," said the man, triumphantly.

Could it be that I had deceived myself, and that this woman was not the mysterious unknown whom I had shot?

I went on with my surgical work, in which I had fortunately had a good deal of experience at one time and another. In a few moments I had removed the bullet, and I examined the bit of lead.

I could scarcely repress an exclamation as I saw my private mark—the letter "F"—stamped upon it.

It was my marked bullet, sure enough, so I knew that the woman on the curtained bed, from whose arm I had extracted it, was the muffled prisoner whom I had seen in the power of the band of black-bearded men.

At that moment there came a rap at the door, and the man who had brought me to the house went to open it. At the same moment the woman on the bed said in a thrilling whisper:

"For God's sake save me from these men!"

"I will—who are you?" I whispered back, but before she could make answer four black-bearded men strode into the room.

I had taken the precaution to put on a pair of small side-whiskers, which I had not worn when the lightning revealed me to the men in front of the old tavern, but they recognized me, it seemed, despite the disguise.

"Keller, you are a fool!" roared one of the black beards.

"Why so?" demanded the man who had brought me to the house.

"Because that man is not the doctor. Cover him with your guns, boys; he must not escape from this house alive, for I more than suspect he is a detective, as I recognize him to be the man who saw us at the old tavern," yelled the disguised man, who was the leader of the party, I supposed.

Instantly four pistols covered me.

"Up with your hands or you are a dead man!" cried the spokesman of the black beards.

I obeyed, for I could not well do otherwise unless I desired to die.

"Now, then, rope and gag him, and we'll place the guy where nothing will trouble him," said the leader of the black beards.

I was bound, a gag was placed in my mouth, and then my captors seated me on a chair.

There could be little doubt it was their purpose to murder me, and so, instead of saving the woman who had asked my assistance, my own life would pay the penalty of my daring venture.

The arm of the woman lay upon the table as I had left it. All save the man who had brought me to the house—who remained so near the bed that had the wounded woman upon it uttered the faintest whisper he must have heard it—withdrew a little distance, and conversed in low tones.

The back of the man was turned toward the table, and I saw the arm of the woman withdrawn.

For a moment it disappeared, and then it was extended, and a minute spark that glowed and glittered with rare brilliancy, fell from between the fingers.

It was a diamond ring.

The woman on the bed had placed it on the table close beside which I sat, and leaning forward I made a startling discovery.

"Good Heavens! what can this mean? Is it possible? But no, no, it cannot be!" I thought, as a sudden suspicion—which a moment later, as I read upon the inside of the ring, these words—

"From Father to Clare,"

became a certainty—flashed upon my mind.

The astounding nature of the discovery which I now supposed I had made, was such that I was for the moment forgetful of all else.

But I now saw the wounded arm again withdrawn from beyond the bed-curtain, and just then the black beards turned toward me.

One of their number had a long, slender-bladed knife in his hand.

"I'll finish him, cap," said the wretch, in a hoarse voice.

He bounded at me.

I thought my last moment had come.

"Bang! bang! bang!" three pistol-shots fired from behind the curtain of the bed rang out, and three of the black beards fell.

The man who had brought me to the house and the other one, who was unharmed, dashed from the room.

Like a flash the woman sprang from the bed, and I saw the face of Clare Conway.

After all, the girl had not been murdered.

With one of my surgical instruments she cut my bonds, and although she suffered greatly from the wound in her arm, she cried heroically:

"You leap from that window upon the roof of a shed, and run to the road; I'll make my escape last, for I have three shots left, and I'll kill any one who tries to stop me."

I leaped through the window she indicated, and reached the road.

A moment or so passed, and then from the stable in the rear of the house Clare Conway came, mounted upon one of the horses belonging to the "black beards."

As she neared me the pain of her wounded arm became so great that she fainted and reeled in the saddle.

The horse reared, and as she was falling I sprang forward and caught her in my arms.

At that moment I saw the two who had run from the room when the girl discharged her pistol, which was still clutched in her left hand; and seizing it, I emptied it in firing at the rascals, who at once took to their heels.

I lost no time in taking Clare home, and to her overjoyed mother and myself she explained:

"The night I was lost on the mountains I wandered into a cave, where I saw a band of men wearing black beards engaged in making counterfeit money. They were going to kill me at first, for fear I would betray their secret, but finally permitted me to return home, after making me take a fearful oath never to reveal what I had seen.

"You know the government has been offering a reward of five thousand dollars for any information leading to the detection of a certain band of counterfeiters, supposed to have their headquarters in an adjoining county, but, as you know now, in reality in our own mountains."

"Tempted by this reward, which would pay the mortgage on mother's property, I at last determined to break the vow I had unwillingly taken and reveal what I knew of the bearded men of the mountains. I wrote a letter to Washington, telling all; and that night, when I had posted the letter, I was seized while on my way to a friend's and carried to the old tavern by a band of men, the leader of whom informed me that they knew I meant to betray them, and that, while he had a plan in mind to make everybody believe I was dead, he should force me to marry him, and that he should then, with me, leave the country forever.

"An old woman, in the employ of the band, forced me to discard all my own clothing and put on these. My clothes were put on the body of the old woman's daughter, who had committed suicide that day, because her lover, a thief, had been sent to State prison for twenty years.

"The face of the dead girl was disfigured, and I think the band meant to pass her off for me."

Thus concluded Clare Conway. The information she gave me resulted in the capture of the band of counterfeiters, and the government paid the girl five thousand dollars.

RAVAGES OF INSECT AUGERS

WHARVES in the San Francisco Harbor have been damaged to the extent of $15,000,000 in the past two years by wood borers. The amount of loss from this cause on both Atlantic and Pacific Coasts is very large. For the purpose of ultimately checking these depredations the Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wis., has started a survey this year.

The log used for a pile is strong and sound when it is first driven, and the wood borer is very weak and quite insignificant in appearance, but the life and usefulness of the former is short when its small enemy attacks it. A ship ties up to what appears to be a perfectly sound and trustworthy California wharf. During the night a rather strong offshore breeze springs up and the next morning the ship is sighted out in the bay towing after her a part of the quay. The supposedly solid wooden piles on which the wharf was built had been bored out by the teredo, a worm with a hard shell auger for a head, and when the ship tugged at her hawsers the piles had snapped off like pipe stems.

The teredo, when young, bores a very small hole, thus gaining entrance into a pile unnoticed. Once inside he grows rapidly and can so completely honeycomb the pile in a few months that it will not even support its own weight. Quite the opposite from the teredos in their method of attack are the marine borers called limnoria. They begin on the outside of the piling and in less than a year make it look like a half-eaten stick of candy. When both these pests get to work on the same pile it usually lasts about six months.

The Forest Products Laboratory has recently proposed a plan for the study of the marine-borer problem, covering the entire coastal waters of the United States. The most promising method of protection which has been tried by the laboratory is that of treating the pile with creosote.

Which Of The Two?

By GOTTLIEB JACOBS

CHAPTER ONE

THE banking house of Thomas La Grange and Company is situated in the centre of the city's vast business section. It is an important establishment, with an enormously large force of employees; its great bay windows fortified by herculean iron bars intended to discourage any burglarious attempts. It presents very much the semblance of a governmental building, so massive is its appearance.

The main safe in this bank is considered the greatest in the world. It is styled the "Unapproachable," undoubtedly because of its formidability. It is the masterpiece of the firm of Deubleut, the famous French safe manufacturers. Built and fastened into the wall, it presents a wholly fantastic appearance, what with its three sides and wrought iron.

This safe, curiously enough, is not opened by the combination system, but by three weird, tiny keys, one for each of the three immense, vault-like doors.

Both the president, Thomas La Grange, and his general manager, Kenneth Halliday, a young, stern-jawed, clear-eyed young man, had each a set of these three keys. It was one of the duties of the latter to open and close the safe whenever necessary. He had free access to its contents at all times; even at midnight he would be admitted into the bank with merely a curt nod to the watchmen.

Mr. La Grange had the utmost confidence in Halliday. The younger man, being a distant relative by marriage to the bank president, lived at his home, a massive structure on the Riverdrive. It was rumored in society circles that Kenneth Halliday was engaged to Beulah La Grange, the daughter of his employer. How true this was only they themselves knew.

On a certain autumn's day, at about noon, Kenneth Halliday was seen to open the door of the vault-chamber in which the "Unapproachable" was located, and appear before a group of busy clerks with tottering step. His face was ashen; there was a foreign, haggard look in his usually brilliant, now bleared eyes.

"God!" he gasped out, sinking into a nearby chair. His tone was horrible; his lips trembled preceptibly. "Robbed! I've been robbed!"

Several of the clerks jumped from their desks and ran toward him.

"Robbed?" one of the employees questioned. "How? Where?"

"All the money in the safe," Halliday breathed laboriously, trembling like a leaf, "is gone!" He covered his pale face with his hands and moaned.

The clerks were startled. "All?" one of them asked.

"Yes, every cent! There were five packages, each containing fifty thousand dollars! My God!" he groaned, as morbid realization penetrated his brain, "two hundred and fifty thousand dollars! A quarter million! Oh, what will Mr. La Grange say?"

With the rapidity of lightning, the news of the robbery spread throughout the bank. General consternation was everywhere evident.

"I wouldn't be so upset," one of the clerks said. "Possibly the chief took the money."

Halliday started up eagerly, catching at the idea as a drowning man would at a straw. But on the instant his face clouded again. Tears shone in his eyes.

"Impossible," he said. "Mr. La Grange never opens the safe, except in my presence. Good Lord, what am I to do?"

"But I thought the safe had been broken into," a clerk cried, utter dismay in his tone.

"No, the doors have been opened and closed with the regular keys."

"Then Mr. La Grange must have taken the money! Only he and you had the keys, and if you did not open the safe, then he did. Let's find out about this before we go any further. Here you, boy, call Mr. La Grange from his office."

But some one had already informed the banking-house president of the mishap. He entered the room just as the messenger started out.

Thomas La Grange was a big man, inclined to corpulency, with iron gray hair and a healthy complexion. But his usual floridness was now supplanted by a hue quite pale. There was uneasiness in his walk; plainly he was flustered.

"Well, what's the matter?" he inquired bluntly, in an unsettled tone.

The sound of Mr. La Grange's voice filled Halliday with a sense of oncoming doom. The dreaded moment had come, there was nothing to do but tell the plain facts in as straightforward a manner as possible. With an air of perfect coolness he arose, and began:

"Mr. La Grange, yesterday you saw me place the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars that we received from McCall & Ewing in the safe. They were wrapped in bundles of fifty thousand apiece, you recall. I have just now discovered the money gone, disappeared, and yet the safe has not been broken open."

Thomas La Grange paled visibly.

"What! he exclaimed, "that enormous sum missing from the safe? Speak up, man! You must be mad; you are dreaming! Who could have taken the money?"

He grasped Halliday roughly by the arm and shook him forcefully.

The bank manager drew himself up. His was the sort of stolid indifference which often results from unexpected catastrophes. With calm slowness he replied:

"I am not mad, nor am I dreaming. I am just relating the simple truth. I realize that only you and I had keys to the safe, but I did not take the money. Nor did I find my keys missing since yesterday. I always have them in my possession."

The calm fortitude of Halliday exasperated the other. Thomas La Grange glowered at him.

"Then who was it that stole the money?" he cried. "No one but you and myself had keys, and you yourself know that they were so made that they cannot be duplicated by the most expert locksmith. Who took the money? Come, speak up, I say. Who do you pretend to say opened the safe? Answer me! Either you or I took the money, and God is my witness that it was not I!"

This oath did not move Halliday in the least. He said stoically:

"I did not take the money. I swear by all that is dear to me, by God in Heaven, that I did not touch one cent of it."

La Grange's ire was seething. His fists were clenched! his face white—the white of passion. For the moment it appeared as if he were going to strike the younger man with his fist.

"No, not one cent," he shouted, "but all of it—a quarter million dollars of it! If you say you did not take the money, then you accuse me! Do you mean, young man, that I opened the safe and took it? Do you insinuate that I stole my own money? If you mean to say that, you lie, damn you!

"I insinuate nothing," Halliday answered. "I merely say that I did not take the money."

"You didn't, eh?" La Grange sneered, with righteous wrath. "Then who did? It was either you or I, and not being me, it was you!"

Kenneth Halliday stared straight into the eyes of the angry bank owner.

"Either you, or I," he repeated slowly. "In that case, Mr. La Grange, it was you!"

"You lie!" La Grange screamed, besides himself with anger.

Halliday's fists hardened. And there was no knowing what would have happened if they had not been held back by the auditors, who sensed a physical contest.

Thomas La Grange shook himself loose. He waved a threatening fist in Halliday's face.

"We'll let the police finish this argument," he cried. "They'll make you come through, all right. I'm done with it."

CHAPTER TWO

IT was late in the afternoon, a little before sundown, when Rodman Larson's attention was called to the onerous ringing of the telephone on his desk. With a feeling of resigned indifference he reached for the receiver, muttering the customary "Hello!"

A singularly familiar voice, appealing and anxious in its tone, wafted through the wire to his ears. Instantly he was all attention.

"Yes, this is Larson, of the Pinkton Detective Agency, speaking. Who is calling, please? . . . What? . . . Oh, yes, Ken Halliday! I thought your voice was familiar. What's the matter, Ken? Anything wrong?"

"I'm in a deuce of a fix!" Halliday's voice came slowly. "I'm at police headquarters now. A quarter million dollars is missing from the safe at the bank—undoubtedly stolen—and I'm being held as a suspect. God Himself knows I'm not guilty, Rod. You'll help me out of this, won't you, old man?"

"Sure thing!" Larson exclaimed resolutely, convincingly. He clenched his fists at the mere thought of so upright a character as his intimate friend, Kenneth Halliday, being suspected of robbery. "I'll be over at the earliest possible moment. At whose office are you?"

"Inspector Winslow's."

"All right, Ken. I'll make it snappy."

Rodman Larson was a private detective who had rapidly acquired a brilliant reputation. Patient, acute, keen-visioned, keen-eyed and never failing, he could unravel the skein of the most complicated affair. He could lay hold of the right thread from the midst of a thousand. He was armed with an irresistible logic, plus a certain sixth sense which all skilled detectives have, and which separates them from the commonplace, every-day sleuth.

As he hurried from the Pinkton building to the headquarters of Inspector of Police Winslow, his searching mind dwelt on the accusation of Kenneth Halliday. But the rather indefinite information which he had received over the wire reduced his contemplations to a vagueness—a vagueness that told him nothing and puzzled him not a little. Of course, he must start on the theory that his chum, Halliday, had nothing to do with the crime. But wait! Should he really begin with that theory. Would it not be better to take an objective viewpoint—a wholly impassive one? Yes, for he must not allow his prejudices and sympathetic feelings to get the better of his true detective sense.

It was with a twinge of mild alarm that Larson remembered his chum saying, "God alone knows that I am not guilty." Why had Halliday not said, "That I am innocent"? "Not guilty" is rather a weak term, the detective reasoned, and did not necessarily imply innocence.

Still, that told him nothing.

It was with a graceful, respectful air that Larson rapped on the door of Inspector Winslow's office, and stepped into the room in silent response to a gruff "Come in." His roving, alert eye took in the room and its occupants at a glance. There was his old friend Halliday seated in a chair; his face drawn and pallid, as cadaverous as the face of a dead man. Inspector of Police Winslow, a mere human mass of flesh and bone, with the eye of a hawk, was seated also, conducting the grill with a superficial air. Larson nodded curtly to him, who reciprocated the greeting by a terse salute. There were also four or five policemen and police officials in the room, two tall young fellows in civilian clothes, and a heavy, anxious-looking individual whom Larson did not know. This man was Thomas La Grange.

"Are you going to take this case for Halliday, Mr. Larson?" the Inspector inquired. He knew the Pinkton detective both by reputation and sight.

"Yes, Inspector," Larson responded. "Mr. Halliday is an intimate acquaintance of mine, and I hate to see him convicted for a crime of which, to my mind, he may be innocent. What's it about, Halliday?" He turned to the accused man, with an expression of inquiry on his face. There was also a glint in his eye—a significance which plainly said, "I'm with you, Ken."

"I'll tell you about it," the Inspector broke in hastily. "I believe that I can give the information in a less prejudiced and more straightforward manner than Halliday can, in his present state. Not that I think him guilty, but—— You see, Mr. Larson, an enormous sum of money has been stolen from the safe in the bank of which Mr. La Grange here (pointing to the heavy-set, anxious-aired man) is the president. The safe had three doors, and there is a key to each door. Both Mr. La Grange and Halliday had a set of these keys.

"Besides this, there were only two others in the bank who knew that such a sum of money was in the safe. They are these two fellows here (leveling his finger at the two tall, young men). "I am convinced that they had nothing to do with the theft. Considering this, the guilt lies between Mr. La Grange and Halliday.

"Now, which of the two?

"Both men declare that the keys have never yet left their possession. And I am inclined to believe them. Nor can the keys possibly be duplicated. It has been attempted innumerable times, I understand, and the duplicates made the exact copies of the originals to the minutest details. But they always fail to open the safe."

The inspector leaned back in his chair, stroking his clean-shaven chin reflectively. A quizzical smile lit the corners of his tiny, roving eyes. The smile seemed to say, "There, Mr. Detective, here is a mystery worthy of your metal. I, Inspector Winslow, tried to unravel it, but with no result. Let me see you solve it. I dare you to solve it."

"M—m, I see," Larson mused, when the chief had finished. He turned suddenly to Halliday. "How much money are you worth?" he interrogated.

The young man paled slightly.

"Why—what—what has that to do——" he stammered.

"Answer my question."

"I haven't very much, I admit," Halliday responded. "Twenty-three thousand, seven hundred and some dollars, all told."

"And how much have you?" asked the Pinkton detective, wheeling on Mr. La Grange.

"That has nothing to do with the investigation." The financier's voice was dignity itself. "I protest——"

Larson nodded significantly at the Inspector, who turned to Thomas La Grange.

"Answer the inquiry, please, Mr. La Grange," he said. "Consider this a part of the grill."

"You will find," the banker averred, suppressing a show of temper, "that my credit, debt and bank books will average me at least a million."

"Very good." Larson was terse. "Now, Mr. Halliday, will you please answer this question: Had you anything to do with the inside manipulation of Mr. La Grange's banking business? I mean, did you know the inner secrets, the big debtors, the creditors, and so forth?"

"No, I knew nothing whatsoever of those matters. Mr. Guerney, the secretary, had charge of those affairs."

"I thought so," Larson said, a bit grimly—"that is, that you had nothing to do with it. Also, I believe that I have heard of this Mr. Guerney before. His full name is John J. Guerney, is it not?"

"Yes, that is the man."

"I have read an article in the Sunday society page about him," the Pinkton man went on. "It seems that the reporters are very well acquainted with his movements, and do not hesitate to have published what they know. He has quite a little money, I understand. A great deal, in fact, eh, Mr. La Grange? He is a millionaire, isn't he?"

"Yes." Sullenly from Thomas La Grange.

"And I gather from what I have read that he is also something of a lady's man. He is acquainted with your daughter, is he not, Mr. La Grange?"

From out of the corner of his eye Larson watched Halliday. The younger man had paled visibly; on the moment, at mention of the banker's daughter, his manner had changed from one of cool stoicism to that of agitation and irritability.

The banking-house president replied to the effect that Guerney did know his daughter.

"Now," said Larson, "there are certain things that may appear rather personal, but circumstances demand that they be revealed. I assure

you, Mr. La Grange, that they are necessary to the solving of this mystery. Mr. Guerney has never until a few months ago set to work in his life; what made him suddenly become your secretary? I am certain that he has not lost his money, making it necessary for him to go to work."

La Grange turned the color of a beet, but instantly regained his composure. For a brief moment he pondered, then declared:

"I refuse to answer that question. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the case."

"You are mistaken," Larson smiled. "It has everything to do with it. Upon that alone I can determine the guilt or the innocence of Mr. Halliday."

"I absolutely refuse to answer it," the banker persisted stoutly. "It is a very impertinent question, and one that has nothing to do with the matter on hand."

"All right, Mr. La Grange, then I shall consider that one point against you. Now, I understand that there have been several financial crashes in Wall Street. Many of the most reliable houses have fallen. Have any of these bankruptcies affected your business standing?"

"None whatsoever. I have fortunately done no business with those houses now bankrupt."

One of the young men, who had been listening silently to all that was being said, now stepped forward hesitatingly. He fidgeted nervously as he declared:

"Pardon me, but Mr. La Grange is mistaken. Cheilmin, Thompson, Kimmerly & Company, at Broad and Wall streets, owed the firm the sum of $417,000. That Company went into bankruptcy last week, and their attorney, acting as adjuster, has told the firm that the creditors will lose every cent that Cheilman, Thompson & Kimmerley owed them. Perhaps Mr. La Grange has overlooked or forgotten this fact."

The young man did not notice the burning look that Thomas La Grange gave him. He stepped back to his former place, while the financier continued to glare at him in silent, mortified wrath.

The detective appeared unruffled. Evidently the information of the bank employee was what he expected to be the case.

"We'll let that go for the present," he announced, after a moment's contemplation. "Now, Mr. La Grange, one more inquiry which may also appear rather personal, and I am through with my informal investigation. It is this: Has Mr. Guerney lent you any large sums at any time whatsoever?"

The financier folded his arms majestically. There was a strange fire in the depths of his eyes—a dim light that flickered balefully. He said quietly:

"That question, sir, calls for the answer that it is no one's business but my own."

The inspector interposed. "Please answer any inquiries put to you, Mr. La Grange," he asserted severely.

There came no reply from the banker.

"Didn't you hear me, sir?" the Inspector said, after a minute's interval. His tone was cross.

But the banker seemed resolved to keep his secret.

"I will not reply to that question," he answered.

Inspector Winslow arose. There was a gleam in his eye that spelled danger. His voice was sinisterly calm:

"You will either answer that question now, Mr. La Grange, or have it forced from you at the formal investigation. And your common sense should tell you that it is for the best to respond to it now."

Thomas La Grange was wavering. Larson smiled as he noted this fact. The information which he had asked the banker was essential to the solving of the robbery. He repeated the question, slowly.

La Grange nodded his head.

"Mr. Guerney has repeatedly lent me large sums of money," he muttered.

"That means that he has you financially in his power, and can crush you whenever he wills," Larson announced. "Your bank books may record you as having deposited a million; they do not, however, record what has been taken out and disposed of. I am certain of this, else why would you borrow money from Guerney when you have funds of your own?"

La Grange turned crimson. A dry gurgle was audible in his throat.

"Oh, quit your fool questions!" he cried angrily. "What has all this to do with the theft of a quarter million dollars from my safe? Are you trying to show that it was I who took the money?"

"Yes," Larson replied, quietly, looking coolly at the blustering, brazen banker, "I am trying to show that it was you who took the money. And," he added, "I am succeeding."

Then, before any one present could recover from the dismay and amazement of the accusal, he reached over and with lightning-like rapidity snapped a pair of steel manacles over the banker's wrists.

La Grange's mental faculties were suspended for the moment. Then his reason returned to him, and with it came intense anger. He was shaking like a leaf; his face was purple with baffled rage.

"It's a lie!" he screamed at length, "a brazen lie!" He tried to clench his fists in wrath, but the steel bit into his flesh. "I tell you, men, he lies! I steal my own money? Why? What for?" His voice rose to a piercing shriek. "That man is crazy, I tell you."

Larson smiled tersely.

"I am no more crazy than you are," he averred. "And as for you, gentlemen," he added, address-

ing the group of startled spectators, "I can explain everything, and show that it was La Grange himself who took the money.

"I would never probably have discovered the real perpetrator of the crime if it hadn't been for the fact that the accused man, Halliday, is a personal friend of mine, and has acquainted me with many of his private affairs. Among the many things he has told me is his relations with Miss La Grange. It appears that they are engaged to be married, but owing to the poor financial condition of Mr. Halliday, the marriage has been put off from time to time.

"Some time ago a stock rush occurred in Wall Street, and stocks and bonds dropped in value. The firm of La Grange & Company, having invested a great deal of its deposits in bonds, was naturally hard hit, and became almost bankrupt. Mr. La Grange at this time received a substantial loan from a firm backed by this company.

"The firm continued to borrow money from this man, all the while going deeper and deeper in his debt, and more and more in his power. Guerney at length met Miss La Grange, asked to marry her, and when she refused, saying she was engaged to Halliday, he threatened to ruin La Grange if he could not marry his daughter. Mr. La Grange did not know what to do, but he ordered his daughter to marry Guerney. She again refused. Her father explained the situation to her, but she persisted that she would marry no one but Halliday. To do otherwise, she said, would be to destroy her happiness.

"All this I know from Mr. Halliday, who was informed of the matter by Miss La Grange herself.

"Mr. La Grange did not know what to do. The only way, he at last decided, was to ruin the character of Halliday by proving him dishonest, so as to make his daughter turn away from him in disgust, and marry Guerney. He remembered the fact that only he and Halliday had keys to the safe, and that if money was stolen from it suspicion would immediately fall on the manager. No one, he thought, would even have the slightest suspicion that he himself stole his own money. The plot was executed. And here we are. Now, Mr. La Grange, do you still deny it?"

The financier broke down. Sobbingly, he admitted that what had just been told was the truth. With tears in his eyes he grasped the Pinkton detective's hand and asked beseechingly for mercy.

The detective was moved.

"I'll see that the law isn't too hard on you," he said, not unkindly. "That is, providing you plead guilty at the trial." Then turning to Halliday, whose face was now radiant, he said:

"Congratulations. A pretty close shave, old man. I wouldn't postpone that marriage any longer, if I were you. Something of the same nature might occur again."

But Halliday appeared troubled. A gloomy expression puckered his brow.

"I don't know," he said dubiously. "Beulah might not want to marry me now, with the disgrace of her father. Maybe he'll slip through yet, eh, old man?" Kenneth suddenly exclaimed, his face brightening. "A good lawyer, and the job is done. I don't see where taking your own money is a crime, anyway. However, I'm off to see Beulah. I'll make her marry me immediately, and then break the news to her. Thanks for the help, Rod. Wish me good luck!"

GHOST PLAYS JAZZ AND HYMNS

SINCE the death of George F. Bosher, wealthy real estate operator, June 18, his late home, at 390 Manchester avenue, Manchester, N. H., occupied by three women, has nightly been visited by a ghost, and the women in desperation have asked the police for protection.

The human occupants of the house are Mrs. Mabel Morrill, Mrs. Abe Allen and Miss Frances Stewart, the latter a granddaughter of Bosher.

Thus far the ghost—which Miss Stewart feels sure is that of her grandfather—has thumped on walls and doors, stalked through the bedrooms, his eyes shining; tossed and broken plates, drinking glasses and chairs, and started the phonograph playing two tunes at a time, according to the story told the police.

Mrs. Allen fainted twice, and she declares that Miss Stewart has swooned fourteen times, since the ghost first appeared.

"Mr. Bosher was buried Monday, and since then he has given neither his granddaughter nor myself, nor any one living in the house, any peace," said Mrs. Allen. "The first night the ghost merely mixed things up on the dressing table. He knocked our white ivory clock to the floor, and it was broken into five pieces.

"We found the clock away at the farther end of the bedroom. Then the phonograph started, right out of the darkness.

"And such tunes as that phonograph played, without a record or winding! It played a combination of Gospel hymns and jazz. And then, in a room where the darkness was thick enough to cut with a knife, a ghostly face would peer at us, and eyes of brimstone would leer at us. We are going to move.

"When a chair starts dancing on its left rear leg, why, that's the limit.

"Frances Stewart did not get along well with her rich grandfather, but the old gentleman's getting even with her now he's gone. I fainted twice, but poor Frances has fainted fourteen times by count. So to-day she went out to get some sleep somewhere else."

Tracing The Moonshiners

By CAPTAIN HARRY DAWSON

I WAS once connected with the Federal Government's staff of hootch-hunters.

The experience I am about to relate occurred to me when I was in Georgia engaged in ferreting out the moonshiners of that State.

I located myself at a little village in the mountains called Earlville, and as I professed to be an artist, I succeeded in obtaining board in an aristocratic family, consisting of a widow and her two charming daughters.

The widow was named Mrs. Darrel, and the girls were called Agnes and Julia, respectively.

The residence of my hostess was located in the center of a large lot, thickly set with shade trees, and at a considerable distance from any other dwelling.

The house was handsomely furnished for that locality, and Mrs. Darrel had the reputation of being wealthy.

Of course I had an object in selecting Earlville for my headquarters; the truth being that I believed there was an organized band of moonshiners in that village, whose secret whisky stills were located somewhere in the neighboring mountains.

I had been an inmate of Mrs. Darrel's house some weeks, and yet so cunning were the hootch makers that, despite the fact that I had roamed the mountains with my sketch-book, intent upon the discovery of some secret of the illicit distillers, I had found out absolutely nothing of value. One evening however, the first of a series of thrilling incidents occurred.

I was seated in the parlor of Mrs. Darrel's house, in company with the two young ladies. Agnes, who had complained of a headache, was reclining on a sofa which commanded a view of a large window in the front of the house, while her sister Julia and myself occupied seats at a little distance on either side of her.

Suddenly Agnes uttered a half-stifled exclamation, and started up, white-faced and frightened, while her eyes, in which there was an expression of absolute terror, were fixed upon the window.

I sprang to my feet, as did Julia Darrel at the same time, and we both saw a man peering in through the window.

"It is he—my enemy has returned!" cried Agnes.

I started for the window, when Agnes clutched my arm.

"Do not approach him. He is a dangerous man, and I believe he is a murderer!" cried the frightened girl in an excited way.

At that moment the man at the window must have seen that he was discovered, for he vanished.

"A murderer? Then it should be the duty of every honest man to seize him. Let me go and I will attempt his capture," I said, and freeing myself from Miss Darrel's hold, I hastened to the window, despite the words of remonstance with which the two young ladies sought to restrain me.

Opening the window, I passed through it and into the grounds, but although I searched everywhere in the grove that surrounded the house, it was evident the intruder had hurriedly quitted the vicinity, for I failed to find him.

I returned to the house and acquainted the young ladies with the fact that the man who had alarmed them had departed from the neighborhood of their residence.

I was curious to know more of this man who was suspected of the crime of murder, and why Agnes Darrel regarded him as her enemy.

"What has just occurred needs an explanation, and I will tell you the story of what I believe, in common with my mother and my sister, to be the story of my only brother's murder," said Agnes Darrel presently.

I signified that I was anxious to hear the narrative, if the relation of the history would not give my friend too much pain.

"Of course it is painful to recall the terrible event, but it may be that you should know. Perhaps you can save me from the dreadful man whose face just appeared at the window, for I am sure his coming here is an omen of evil, and I may soon need a protector," said the young lady.

"I will be only too happy to serve you, and you shall find a protector in me if that man dares to trouble you further," I said earnestly, and I meant to make good my words.

"I believe you, sir. Now to acquaint you with the facts that preceeded the occurrence which has just startled us. The man you saw at the window is called Malan Varcoe. He is a man of whom I know but little, but I believe him to be secretly connected with the moonshiners, who have a strong organization in this neighborhood, as my brother, who would never have anything to do with them, told me before his death.

"In some way my brother became acquainted with Malan Varcoe, who knows how to make himself agreeable when it serves his purpose.

"My brother Charles invited Varcoe to our house, and he soon began to pay me marked attentions. Until a careful study of his character convinced me that he was not a good man, I was pleased with him.

"Meanwhile Varcoe found out that my brother had a mania for gambling, and being a skilled poker player and, as I believe now, a professional gambler and cheat, he led my brother on to play night after night in a resort in the village

called 'The Mountain Jug,' a saloon which does not bear the best reputation.

"Brother Charles and Varcoe were accustomed to play alone in a room on the second floor of the saloon, and one night when they were there, with the door locked, a couple of pistol-shots were heard, and Varcoe rushed down-stairs and shouted:

" 'Charles Darrel and I quarreled over a game of cards. He tried to shoot me, but in self-defense I shot first, and I think he's badly hurt. I call upon you all to remember and bear witness to this statement.'

"The occupants of the saloon, including the proprietor, Seth Soals, a dwarf, who was a particular friend of Varcoe's, rushed up-stairs.

"They found the door locked, and when they burst it open, they discovered my brother lying dead beside the open window; and Varcoe swore that after he was shot, Charles must have locked the door and opened the window, although he could not imagine why he did so.

"Varcoe was tried and acquitted by a jury of men whom I suspected to be moonshiners, and then disappeared. Before he left he met me one evening on the street, and clutching my arm, he said:

" 'When I return, it will be for you. I've vowed to win you, and I never relinquish a purpose once I have made up my mind.' "

Miss Darrel paused.

"I think your fears are groundless, miss. We do not live in a feudal age. Young ladies are not carried off to secluded castles and forced to marry against their wills," I said, lightly, in the hope of reassuring her.

"This Varcoe is a desperate man, and he would dare do anything; but I have not concluded my story," she responded. "After Varcoe disappeared, a negro in the employ of Seth Soals placed a bit of paper in my hands which he found under the window of the room in which my brother was killed. Here is the paper, which I have carefully preserved."

As she spoke, Miss Darrel produced a small bit of paper, upon which was traced these words:

"Varcoe shot me because I have discovered a secret of his. Knife in my trunk; look at it—body under jug. He—dying. I——"

The dead man's message ended abruptly.

Death had come before he completed his message.

"That is my brother's hand-writing. As soon as I had received that paper, which I only obtained when I had sworn to the negro who gave it me not to betray him, I searched my brother's trunk for the knife he mentioned, but failed to find it. Undoubtedly some one in our house had removed it, for the lock on the trunk had been forced, and soon after that a drunken old darky, who had been in my mother's employ for a week or so, disappeared. Of course I understand that my brother meant to tell me that there was a dead body under the saloon called the 'Mountain Jug,' and that the knife in his trunk was in some way connected with the revelation of the mystery of the presence of the dead body. But I was powerless to investigate the matter, and so were my friends. Moreover I fear that were any one to attempt to reveal the real meaning of my brother's last letter, Varcoe would not hesitate to kill that person, if the secret to which my brother alludes is that of a murder.

"After Charles was shot he must have locked the door to prevent any one's surprising him before he wrote the note. Probably before he wrote it he opened the window out of which he must have thrown the writing. The fact of his having taken the precaution to drop it out of the window goes to prove that he distrusted the inmates of the Mountain Jug."

"You have reasoned logically, miss, and now, if you please, I will make it my business to find out what the secret of Varcoe's really is," said I.

"You must not do so. You are a stranger here. You will be suspected, and Varcoe will cause your death."

"And yet your brother's murder should be avenged. Although Varcoe escaped the penalty of that crime, if I could bring home to him another murder I fancy he would not get off so easy. However, I shall act with circumspection, miss, and you need fear nothing for me," I said.

When I retired for the night, I said to myself:

"So 'The Mountain Jug' is a resort of the moonshiners, and Malan Varcoe is a member of the band, eh? Very good. I shall make it a point to visit the rendezvous of the hootch makers tomorrow night. Miss Agnes does not suspect that it is my business to follow up and ferret out crime. I wonder what her opinion would be if she knew I am a detective. I fancy that I have found favor in her eyes; and as I think her the most charming girl in the world, I trust my profession will not be objectionable.

Myron Payne, a government detective, who was sent to ferret out the mooners, mysteriously disappeared. The fate of the poor fellow had been a mystery ever since, and when I left Washington I promised his wife that I would spare no pains to settle the question of his fate. In "piping" the mooners, then, it must be my constant purpose not only to find out the secrets of their illicit distilleries, but to seek for a clue to the fate of Myron Payne and to Malan Varcoe's hidden crime.

Next day I took my gun and fishing-rod, and with my sketch-book in my pocket, I started for the mountains.

I had found good fishing in a mountain stream, and I was enjoying the sport, when my hook caught under water, and as I pulled away at it up it came, attached to a rusted bowie-knife.

Detaching the hook I examined the knife, while a thrill of excitement shot through my frame as I remembered Charles Darrel's dying message, and what was therein stated regarding a knife.

Again was the adage that "Murder will out" verified, for there, upon the handle of the knife, engraved on a silver plate let into the bone, was the name:

"Malan Varcoe!"

I further discovered that the point of the blade was broken.

About an inch of the blade was gone.

I said nothing about finding the knife, but that night, after carefully making myself up as the most dilapidated specimen of a tramp imaginable, wearing a wig and false beard, I secretly took my departure from the residence of the Darrels, and made my way to "The Mountain Jug."

I was armed with a pair of automatics, and was not much afraid my disguise would be penetrated.

The bar-room of the saloon was a long narrow room, with a bar at one end, no windows in the side, and only two small ones in front, between which was the front door.

In the center of the room was a lamp suspended from the ceiling, and several tables were arranged against one of the side walls, while a row of whisky barrels were piled along the other. Half a dozen men were in the room when I entered. As I shambled to the bar, I grunted out:

"Evening, men."

Every one regarded me curiously for they knew I was a stranger and naturally they looked upon all strangers with suspicion.

Reaching the bar, I addressed the bartender, who was a young fellow, with a brilliant cardinal nose.

"Say, kin I stand you up fer a drink?" said I.

"Well, hardly, my broken-up friend," replied the barkeeper.

"Why?"

"Because you're a yegg."

"I'm no bum. I'm a gent—a gent of leisure, sah."

"Well, I want you to tramp out of here mighty quick."

The bartender made a threatening move and I dodged.

The men in the bar-room were laughing and enjoying the scene hugely, and that was what I wanted, for it was my game to get into their good graces.

They were delighted.

"Give him a drink," some one shouted.

"There's lots of sport in the old chap!"

These and other remarks of a like character proved that I had succeeded so far beyond my hopes.

"All right, if you fellers pay for his booze!" said the bartender as he set out whisky.

Then I sang again.

"I reckon the guy is hollow clean down to his toes," the bartender moaned, as I poured out a drink large enough to break the heart of the average saloon keeper.

So I kept on singing and drinking, as my audience thought, and appearing to be getting very drunk, much to the amusement of the crowd.

Finally I sank down upon the floor, seemingly in a state of helpless intoxication when some one rolled me under a table.

Just then Malan Varcoe and Seth Soals entered the room.

Soals was a hunch-back dwarf with an ugly face. Just the kind of a man one would not care to meet in the dark if he had money in his pocket.

Soals put up the shutters to the only two windows in the room, and locked and securely bolted the door. This done, he and Varcoe seated themselves at the very table under which I lay.

"Well, it's all fixed. I sent a note to Agnes Darrel, which purports to be from the nigger who gave her a note which Charles Darrel wrote before he died. The nigger gave away the whole thing to another darky when he was drunk, and so it came to my ears. The nigger who gave the girl the note can write, so Agnes Darrel will think nothing strange of his writing. In the note it says the writer has found out something more about her brother's death, and asks her to meet him in the rear of her mother's house at midnight. I shall be there, and I want you to help me. You and I will carry the girl away to our still in the mountain cave. There she shall give up the note which accuses me of more than one crime, and become my wife," said Varcoe.

He spoke in a low tone of voice.

No one in the place save myself and Soals could have heard him.

"I'm with ye, me boy. Come, let's be moving, fer by the time we git to the spot where you expect the gal to meet ye, she ought to be there. If I were you, if I could get her to give up her brother's note, or swear to do so, I'd let her go. Carryin' her away fer keeps may make us a heap of trouble," said Soals.

"I won't trouble you for any advice, Soals," growled Varcoe, and presently the two quitted the house.

When they passed out the door was left unlocked. I meant to leave the place now and warn Agnes Darrel of her danger. If I could reach her residence before she went to meet the author of the decoy note, all might be well.

I had just crawled from under the table, and was making my way to the door when a half-drunken fellow burst into the room and staggered up against me. The man almost fell, and to save himself, he made a grab at me just as I ducked my head to dodge under his arm. He caught my wig, and it came off in his hands, with my false beard.

"By golly, this man is in disguise!" yelled one of the band. In a moment every inmate of the place rushed at me.

"A detective!—a detective!" they yelled.

The gleam of pistol-barrels glinted from every side.

The half-drunken fellow had thrown himself upon me the moment my disguise came off.

One of the most deadly perils of my life confronted me.

I hurled the man who clutched me aside, and with one desperate leap I tore the door open and dashed out into the darkness as a volley of pistol-shots was discharged.

The night was so dark I could scarcely see my hand before my face, but I ran for Mrs. Darrel's.

I was not pursued, or if I was, my foes took the wrong course. The fear that I should be too late to save Agnes lent me speed, and in a few moments I was near her mother's house.

Suddenly a shriek reached my ears. It was Agnes' voice.

I dashed to the rear of the house, and there I came upon Varcoe and Soals. Agnes was struggling in the grasp of the former. With a blow of my pistol I knocked Soals senseless, and before he could prevent it, I had served Varcoe the same way.

Instantly I secured the pair with handcuffs, and then, as I reassured Agnes, who had sunk to the ground, I told her who I was and how I came to be there.

When the two crooks came to their senses, I marched them to Mrs. Darrel's at the point of my pistol, and leaving them there guarded by two servants, I ran to the telegraph office, and sent a dispatch to a neighboring village, where a large force of revenue officers was stationed, asking them to come on at once.

They arrived before morning, and we raided the Mountain Jug.

In the cellar we found the body of a man buried in a shallow grave, and his clothing enabled us to identify him as Myron Payne, the missing revenue officer.

There was a knife wound in his breast, and in it we found the point of a bowie-knife, which exactly fitted the broken knife belonging to Varcoe, which I had fished out of the mountain stream.

The result may be surmised. Varcoe was convicted of Myron Payne's murder, and in due time he paid the penalty of his crime.

Before he died he made a confession, which enabled us to break up the moonshiners' organization, of which he had been a member.

When I left Georgia I was a very happy man, for Agnes Darrel was my promised wife.

EFFECT OF FEAR ON CHILDREN'S HEARTS

ACCORDING to Dr. Mabel Elliott, head of the American Woman's Hospitals, who is now serving with the Near East Relief at Ismid, Turkey, a large number of the Armenian children under her care are suffering from enlarged hearts or other forms of heart disease, due to the constant fear to which they have been prey during the past few years.

Relief workers in the Near East have long been familiar with the mental petrifaction due to the terrible experience through which these children have passed, most of them having forgotten everything of their past, their names, their homes and their language included, but this is the first instance that has been recorded of the effect of fear on their hearts.

The cure which Dr. Eliott is practising with these children is a combination of mental and medical. First of all they are made to realize that they are entirely out of danger and among friends. Then they are put on a special diet of nourishing foods and certain exercises are prescribed. The results so far have been remarkably successful.

"RED SCHOOLHOUSE" SAILS THE SEVEN SEAS

APPRENTICES on the Spanish steamship "Artigan Mendi" are required to attend a floating school while sailing the seven seas. This ship which came into Galveston a few weeks ago and took a cargo of wheat for a foreign port, is fitted up with a regular schoolroom where the apprentices receive daily instruction from a professor who devotes all of his time to the schoolroom duties. The vessel is operated by the Spanish Government and carries seventeen apprentices, who are being trained to become steamship officers. These boys, most of whom appear to be about 16 or 17 years old, are taught both the theory and practice of the things that a model steamship officer should know.

A large cabin amidships has been fitted up as a perfect schoolroom for the boys and their instructor. It is near the quarters in which the apprentices live and to their refectory. Large desks of the kind typical of the little red schoolhouses of the United States, but wrought richly in fine wood, are installed, and each apprentice has all the textbooks and materials and instruments he needs for his work. On one bulkhead of the cabin is affixed the time-honored blackboard, where intricate problems may be visualized through the medium of common chalk. The place is light and airy and seems more suitable for a schoolhouse than the average building used for that purpose.

The apprentices combine actual operation of the vessel with the theory that is taught in the schoolroom. The day is so divided that they may gain, in each twenty-four hours, a measure of practical work together with textbook information. What they learn, therefore, they know thoroughly and are able to apply practically.

Current News

LIGHTNING BOLT KILLS CHILD

Dorothy Pisholk, 5 years old, was instantly killed in her home near Rothschild, Wis., when a lightning bolt struck her on the head and passed through her body. The bench upon which she sat was destroyed. Her parents in the same room were injured.

MULE KICKS OFF BOY'S EAR.

Clement, ten-year-old son of Jacob Rossman, of Peru, near Norwalk, O., had his left ear kicked off by a mule recently as he was leading the animal to pasture. The boy was thrown into convulsions, and surgeons are awaiting improvement in his condition before operating.

WHY THEY WORSHIP THE MOON.

The Shipibos Indians of South America worship the moon because she comes to give light in the night, while the sun shines only in the day when no light is needed. This statement, made by Dr. W. C. Farabee, the South American explorer, is quoted by Prof. Samuel G. Barton of the University of Pennsylvania in a letter to Science.

LARGEST LOCK.

The greatest single lock in all the world is in operation on the "Soo" Canal. This lock has a length of 1,350 feet, with a width of 50 feet, a height of 50 feet and a lift of 20 feet. These dimensions far surpass those of any other lock in the Kiel Canal being but 1,032 feet. Two of the largest lake freighters that plow these waters, or four small steamers, may be accommodated in the lock at one time. The lock is operated by means of electricity and requires but six minutes to be filled or emptied.

EFFECT OF COLORS ON PRISONERS.

The officials of a penitentiary are trying a new experiment by repainting the four cell-blocks and allowing each prisoner to select the color he likes for his own cell, for the psychological effect it has upon the malefactor. The corridors of the cell-house are being painted a light brown. The cells are being painted in attractive tints of yellow, blue, brown, buff, etc. None of the cells, the Warden explained, is to have sombre settings, but are all to be bright and cheerful. The penologist is always an optimist.

CAT LIVES 25 DAYS IN HOLE.

How long can a cat live in a dark hole without food? The answer is twenty-five days, according to accounts in the Paris press of a cat's adventure.

Twenty-five days ago a mason mending a rain-pipe system on the Church of St. Ambrose closed up a pipe which was not to be discarded. The other day it was opened again, and from it emerged a blinking, emaciated cat, staggering on feeble legs. The animal had scarcely strength to lap warm milk hastily procured by the workmen from a neighboring cafe, but by the time it had finished it was sufficiently recovered to attend to its toilet and to wash its whiskers.

SHINBONE IN HER ARM.

For the first time in a year—thanks to a clever bit of bone carpentry—Mrs. Florentine Kurpiewka of No. 170 Roebling Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., went about her housework on May 5 ably and comfortably, despite the fact that part of her right shin was in her right arm.

She fell and broke her forearm a year ago. When it was set the bones did not come together. She tried many specialists without success, then went to St. Mary's Hospital, Long Island City.

Dr. H. C. Courten, assisted by Dr. D. J. Colicchio, removed two sections of shinbone, six inches long and one-quarter inch thick, then took out the ill-fitting bones of the forearm and replaced them with the shin sections. They were bound together with kangaroo tendons, which will dissolve, and then the arm was put in a cast.

X-ray photographs showed that the bones had knit together perfectly and the woman was discharged.

STUDY CHIMPANZEE'S BRAIN.

Students at the University Medical College, Cincinnati, held an unusual clinic with the body of Tarzan, an "educated" chimpanzee that died in the Zoo recently of pneumonia. Dr. H. McE. Knower, professor of anatomy, was assisted by Dr. E. F. Malone, neurologist, who got permission from the Zoo to take the chimpanzee's brain for scientific purposes.

Anatomical slides will be made and sent to every medical college in the United States. The skeleton will be preserved for the anatomical department of the medical college. The skin will be stuffed and exhibited.

Tarzan was 7 years old. He was caught by animal men in the French Congo when 3 years old and taken to London. A showman was attracted by the intelligence of the animal and bought it as a present for his wife. He later kept it in her New York apartments and trained it to eat at the table.

The doctors said an examination of the brain showed every convolution and every attribute of the human brain excepting size. Its weight was about half that of the human brain.

THEY DIG FISH IN FLORIDA.

Izaak Walton scarcely would believe his eyes if he were to walk through the country near New Smyrna, Fla., and encounter negroes digging live fish from the ground as if they were potatoes, and even persons accustomed to the miracles of this age would look twice and then set out in search of an oculist. A certain variety of mud fish found in nearly all parts of the State is responsible for this.

This queer member of the finny tribe inhabits streams or pools which have mud banks or bottoms, is black and weighs up to five or six pounds. When the water in a pond evaporates, as it does in certain seasons of the year, leaving only a mass of mud which on the surface is practically dry, it doesn't worry the fish. They merely burrow into the mud to wait for the rain and apparently continue to live as long as the earth it wet. The negroes locate them by exploring the mud with their bare feet.

The fish is edible, but is not a favorite because of its stringy and coarse flesh.

HOUSE LIGHTED BY FLOW FROM FAUCET

Prof. Colardeau, head of the physics department in a French university, lights his house with electricity made by the flow of water from an ordinary faucet. Describing his method to the Academie des Sciences in Paris recently, he said that if the water had its source 236 feet higher than the faucet a flow of one quarter per second would furnish one-horse power.

Prof. Colardeau mounted a water turbine on the faucet, geared this to a dynamo which sent its electric current into a storage battery. From this he obtained enough current to light a 500-candle-power lamp and several lamps that vary between ten and twenty candle-power.

It is not necessary that the faucet flow all the time. The ordinary use of a kitchen faucet is enough, for the turbine may be installed in such a way that the water can be used after passing through it, and each time the faucet is turned on the turbine sets the dynamo going and the storage battery accumulates the electricity for use as needed.

FIRST MISSIONARIES TO CHINA.

The first general attempt to introduce Christianity into China dates from April 24, 1845, when the Chinese Government, following the disastrous war with Great Britain, granted permission to foreigners to teach the Christian religion. Missionaries from many countries began immediately to flock to China, but in most places the "white devils" were received with hostility. The Emperor Taou-Kwang, who in the latter part of his reign favored the introduction of European arts and religion, died in 1850, and his son, Hieng-Fung, adopted a reactionary policy.

One of the odd results of the introduction of Christianity in China was the appearance in 1851 of a rebel leader who called himself as the restorer of the worship of the true god, Shang-ti, and derived many of his domas from the Bible. He called himself the brother of Jesus, the second son of God and the monarch of all beneath the skies, and demanded universal submission. His insurgent followers called themselves Taepings, or "Princes of Peace," but the title was utterly belied by their atrocious deeds.

CORPUSCLES EAT TADPOLE'S TAIL.

The spring of the year is the small boy's delight, especially if he can gain access to ponds. Leaving home with a piece of muslin, cheesecloth or netting, and perhaps a few old umbrella ribs, he starts for the pond, picking up an old can or bottle on the way. Arriving at his hunting ground, he places two of the umbrella rods crosswise, ties them with strings and fastens the netting to each of the four ends of the rods. This net is in turn fastened to a stick or tree limb, the can or bottle filled with water from the pond, and the boy is ready for business.

This business is the catching of tadpoles, thousands of which, ranging from the size of a shoe button to an inch in length, may be seen in the shallow water near the shore, and resting on the bottom, and coming to the surface every now and then for air. The tadpole is an air breathing animal.

When the young frog or tadpole attains a certain stage of development and when it is about to exchange its water life for the higher land existence the fishlike tail requires repression and demands extinction as part and parcel of frog advance. Of old we believed the disappearance of the frog's tail was due to a simple process of atrophy, or wasting away.

By close microscopic investigation we are able to see a curious work proceeding in the tadpole's appendage. It swarms with white cells which have migrated into its substance from the blood vessels. They are there for a purpose, and they work with a will. They are seen in the act of eating and devouring the substance of their possessor. The tadpole in this sense, and through its semi-independent white blood cells, is living upon itself, and eating up life's "principal" in place of living upon the interest represented by its food.

Within the bodies of these white cells in the tadpole's tail microscopists have been enabled actually to see the fragments of muscle and nerve they have torn from the tail substance. Little wonder that the tail "grows small by degrees and beautifully less" under such vigorous attacks; and in the gills of the tadpole (which disappear with the tail) the same devouring process is seen to proceed. Thus the disappearance of the tail is a matter of vital action—as much so, indeed, in one sense, as it growth. It is a new experience of life to find certain of the living particles of the body set apart, as in the case of the frog, for the work of ridding that body of its encumbrance and of assisting it to rise in the scale of life.

ANCHORING A "SHIP OF THE DESERT."

Because of its peculiar swaying motion in walking, the camel has been called the "ship of the desert." This title may also have some reference to the extreme stupidity and passivity of the animal, which submits to great loads, which it will often carry for days at a time without stopping for food or drink, with no more urging than a ship would require from the hands of its pilot.

The manner in which the drivers hobble the camels when they stop for a rest is interesting, says Popular Science Monthly. They do not depend upon stakes driven in the deep, yielding sand, but simply double back and tie one of the forelegs of the animals, so that it can lie down or rise up but cannot move from the spot.

A NEGRO SUPERSTITION.

An old negro superstition was successfully brought into play near Corsicana, Tex., a few days ago, much to the surprise of the doubting white men who witnessed the occurrence. James Robertson, a negro, fell into Chambers Creek and was drowned.

All efforts to recover his body by ordinary means proved futile. An aged negro drove up and told the searching party to go to the dead negro's home, get a shirt that the man had worn and throw it into the creek. He said that the shirt would sink to the bottom when it reached the point above where the dead body rested.

As a last resort the shirt was obtained and cast into the creek. It floated downstream a short distance and then disappeared. Grappling hooks were sunk to the bed of the stream at that point and the body of the dead negro was brought to the surface.

TWO INVENTIONS THAT INTEREST SURGEONS.

The London (England) correspondent of the Medical Record (New York) writes that two members of the staff of the London Hospital have invented two important additions to the surgeon's art. One of these, a new form of sterilized catgut, is the result of over ten year's expert investigation by Mr. H. P. Morley, the chief of the Ligature Department, who has, it is said, produced a catgut that is not only absolutely sterilized but will "persist" or last for definite periods of ten, twenty, thirty, or forty days in the wound as the surgeon may require, and then become rapidly absorbed after the time specified.

The second invention is that of Mr. H. S. Souttar, head of the surgical unit of the hospital, and consists of an eyeless needle. The needle has in place of an eye a minute hole bored longitudinally in the head. An end of the catgut is placed in this and sealed in so that the surgeon can sew with a single thread. Both the inventors have placed their inventions at the disposal of the London Hospital.

PLANT LIVES BY EATING INSECTS.

In the bogs and wet marshes along the Jersey shore and Atlantic Coast, grows a flesh-eating plant, which few New Yorkers ever recognize when they pass it. This insectivorous herb is popularly known as the "sundew."

There are several species in America. The flowers are very pretty, five-petalled and borne at the top of a long, naked support. In the central flower cluster the buds always face the sky or brightest light. They are white or purplish in color.

The roots are poorly developed, and yet the small plants thrive even in the mosses that grow around the wet marshes. This is because they are flesh-eaters. The roots, therefore, serving principally to anchor the plants and to supply the large amount of water needed, are never called upon to do any great amount of work for the nourishment of the plant.

The leaves, which vary in shape in the several species, are covered thickly on the upper face with wine-red filaments having a glistening drop like dew at the tips. These are stalked glands, destined for a purpose deadly as that of the tentacles of the octopus. In times of inaction they radiate in concentric circles, but let a fly or any other small insect alight on one of the glands, it is glued fast by the sticky fluid and is ultimately smothered by it. In the meantime the tenacles have all bent toward the fly, and such of them as succeed in touching it secrete an acid juice and a ferment similar to pepsin, with which they digest the insect.

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39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Charles F. Oursler.
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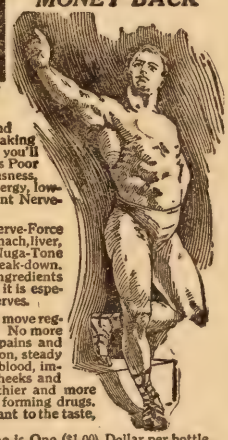

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It is a strange story, that of the Branicki sapphire, which M. Lacomblez, examining magistrate, is at present investigating. This precious stone, known as "The King of Sapphires," belonged to the Branicki family; it was bought at Frankfort in 1840, weighed 291 carats, is said to have been worth several million francs, and was taken from the hip pocket of Count Xavier Branicki at Warsaw in July, 1918, during the German occupation.

The Count found himself in Paris recently, and knowing that there is an important market for precious stones in the city, he thought he would ask the police to make inquiries about his sapphire. The police inspectors found in the possession of a dealer in precious stones not the sapphire, but portions of it.

He was aware that the stone had figured in the exhibition in Vienna in 1867, and in the Paris exhibition in 1878, and realizing that it would be difficult to get rid of it he had it cut into fragments, some of which were utilized in rings and necklaces. Of the 291 carats only 136 carats remain.

REFITTING BIG LINER TO COST $1,000,000.

Details of the reconditioning of the transatlantic liner George Washington, which is the largest American merchant vessel ever to fly the American flag, were announced recently by the Todd Shipyards Corporation, which has received the contract from the United States Mail Steamship Company. The cost will exceed $1,000,000 and the terms provide for the completion of the work by August.

During the peace negotiations the George Washington was used by President Wilson on his two visits to Europe. It was also the choice of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium when they came to the United States. The steamer was used as a transport during the war and carried many thousands of troops. The George Washington was one of the North German Lloyd vessels seized by this Government.

When refitted the steamer will have accommodations for 3,000 passengers. The swimming pool is to be the largest ever installed on a steamship. The installation of billiard tables has been made possible as the result of an anti-rolling device.

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"I had suffered agony for years from rheumatism and associated disorders, and Mrs. Reed was tortured with the demon neuritis almost beyond endurance. We had read and talked so much about 'Uric Acid' that our minds seemed poisoned. But the 'Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism' made it all clear to us and now we are both free from the suffering and misery we endured so many years. I believe I was the hardest man in the world to convert! For me to discard the old 'Uric Acid' theory, and what I now know to be absolutely false, for the new, scientific understanding of the causes and cure of rheumatism, was like asking me to change my religious beliefs! But I did change, and it was a fortunate day for me and mine when I did so."

NOTE: "The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism" referred to above by Pastor Reed lays bare facts about rheumatism and its associated disorders overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past. It is a work that should be in the hands of every man or woman who has the slightest symptoms of rheumatism, neuritis, lumbago or gout. Any one who sends name and address to H. P. Clearwater, 534 F Street, Hallowell, Maine, will receive it by mail, postage paid, absolutely free. Send now, lest you forget the address! If not a sufferer, cut out the explanation and hand it to some afflicted friend.

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FISH OR ANIMAL.

"When is a fish not a fish?" is the question uppermost in the mind of Forest Taylor, of No. 30' North Broadway, Oklahoma City, Okla., these days.

It being an ideal fishing day, Taylor decided to spend it imitating Izaak Walton in beguiling the fish from their retreats. Upon arriving at a pond north of town, he cast his seine, intent upon capturing a few minnows for bait. When he drew it from shallow depths, he beheld a sight that made him think corn whisky had got into his system by absent treatment.

He drew a pair of nameless, unknown species of water creatures with heads like that of a dog-fish, skin like that of a pickerel and a body like that of a lizard. Just back of the head there is a pair of gills similar to those of Japanese gold-fish, which enables the creature to breathe under water. Its fish-like head can be compared, as to the setting of eyes and form of nostrils, to that of a Gila monster.

Samuel B. Lippincott, teacher of biology in Oklahoma City High School, is intending to take the species to the biology laboratory for a definite research, in the endeavor to find what status the animal — or fish —has.

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